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PRACTICAL SERMONS,

PREACHED TO
A COUNTRY CONGREGATION.

BY THE
REV. GEORGE WATSON,

INCUMBENT OF ETHERLEY,
IN THE COUNTY OF DURHAM.

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PREFACE.



THE following discourses have been published for the sole purpose of assisting in liquidating a debt, contracted, in the erection of a new Parsonage House at Etherley.

The late pious and munificent Bishop Van Mildert had expressed to the author his intention considerably to augment the value of the living of Etherley. But it pleased God to call him from this earthly scene before that intention was accomplished.

The Parsonage had been previously commenced, under the conviction that the augmented means promised by his Lordship would enable the author to complete the building without difficulty. The good and kind purposes of the Bishop not having been effected at the time of his decease, the author adopted the plan of publishing a volume of his

sermons by subscription, to relieve him from the difficulties arising out of the preceding circumstances.

That the plan is not unworthy of approval, he trusts he may believe, from the sanction of the numerous and highly respectable individuals who have kindly honoured him with their names as subscribers. He has indeed met with encouragement far beyond what he had any reason to anticipate.

Towards Her most Gracious Majesty the Queen Dowager, for her great condescension and kindness to so humble an individual: towards his own Right reverend and esteemed Diocesan, for his Lordship's very great kindness and encouragement; and towards several others of his subscribers, the author's deep feelings of gratitude are such as cannot be expressed in this Preface. To every subscriber he renders the sincere acknowledgments of a thankful heart.

Respecting the discourses in this volume; they were never intended for publication. The author has too humble an opinion of his own compositions, ever to have presumed to have solicited towards

them the notice of the public, except under the circumstances already mentioned.

He respectfully requests his readers to bear in mind, that the sermons were composed chiefly for the instruction of a humble and unlettered people; and that they make no pretensions to merit, either as to their style or language. He feels comfort however in the promise, (Isa. 55. 11.) that the word of God which goeth forth, shall not return unto him void: and that the dissemination of the seed of the gospel, even by the meanest and most unworthy of his servants, shall not be a vain work, but shall prosper in the thing whereunto it is sent.

Should these humble discourses be the instrument of reaching and improving the hearts of any who read them, the author desires that the praise and glory may be given to God alone, for his own blessed work of grace.

Etherley Parsonage,

August, 1842.

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PRACTICAL SERMONS.

SERMON I.

ON THE OPENING OF THE NEW CHURCH
AT ETHERLEY.

1 Kings ch. 8. v. 27.

*But will God indeed dwell on the earth?
behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens
cannot contain thee; how much less this
house that I have builded?*

THESE words are a part of the beautiful and affecting prayer which king Solomon offered up to God, at the dedication of the Temple, which he had built for the public worship of the people of Israel. I have chosen them for the text of my present discourse, on account of their application

to our own circumstances, in having had this church built, and opened out this day for the same holy and religious purpose. And though the temple of Solomon far exceeded, in outward splendour and magnificence, the humble building in which we are now assembled; yet, as a Christian Church, *our* temple possesses a glory of a far higher character, even the presence of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners, who has promised in his word, that where his people are gathered together in his name, there will he be in the midst of them, to bless them and to do them good.

It has been the practice of almost all nations, from the earliest ages of the world, to set apart and consecrate some particular place or building for the performance of religious worship. And though the Lord Jehovah dwelleth not in temples made with hands; yet mankind have generally been impressed with the belief, that the God whom they worshipped was more especially to be found in the place which they had set

apart for his service. Hence, even among the idolatrous heathen, the temples which they dedicated to their imaginary and false gods, were often resorted to by multitudes of worshippers, with such eagerness and devotion, as might be a lesson to many christians of the present day in their attendance upon their own churches, and in the performance of the public services of their own more pure, and more spiritual religion.

With respect to the early worshippers of the One true God, there is little intimation in scripture as to the manner either of their private or public devotions. It is probable, that in the time of the older patriarchs, they appropriated a certain part of their own dwelling, in which they assembled at stated periods to serve the Lord; and that the head, or father of each family, officiated as the priest and instructor of his kindred and dependants. The first consecrated building of which we have any account, was the Tabernacle erected by Moses, after the departure of the Children of Israel

from the land of Egypt. This continued until the death of David, on account of the unsettled and wandering condition of the Jews, and of the succeeding wars, in which they were so frequently engaged. The kingdom of Israel being restored to peace, Solomon laid the foundation of the Temple at Jerusalem; and after being seven years in building, it was solemnly dedicated to God, in the presence of all the elders of his people. The Lord was pleased to accept their offering, and visibly to manifest his glory in the place which he had chosen to put his name there. After the lapse of four hundred years, the temple, having been plundered of all its treasures, was burnt and entirely destroyed, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem carried away captive into Babylon. In the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia, succeeded the second temple, and though infinitely inferior to the first in beauty and grandeur, and more especially in wanting the visible manifestation of God's presence; yet it was foretold that

the glory of this latter temple should far exceed that of the former, inasmuch as it should be visited by Him who would come to be “a light to lighten the gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel.”

In the fulness of time Messias came, and introduced into the world a more spiritual religion. And as the partial scheme of the Jewish Polity was now to be superseded by the better dispensation of the gospel; and as that gospel was not to be confined to any particular nation or people, but was to be diffused and spread abroad as far as to the uttermost bounds of the earth; it was necessary that Christian places of worship should be erected wherever the gospel was introduced. For although the burdensome rites and ceremonies of the temple worship were now to be abolished, and to be exchanged for the purer and simpler forms of Christianity; yet the religion of Jesus also required attendance upon the outward means of grace; and his disciples were commanded, not to forsake the assembling

of themselves together, but to enter into the congregation of his worshippers, and with one heart and one voice perform their public devotions to God.

The first places of worship in which the Christians were wont to meet together, were of a very humble character. Their religion was despised by the Jews; and, from the long and cruel persecutions which they suffered under the Roman emperors, they were in a manner obliged to hide themselves from the rest of mankind. The wisdom of God, however, is far above all the devices of men. He had promised, with regard to his church, that "the gates of hell should not prevail against it;" and, in spite of the bitter persecutions of their enemies, and of the numbers who were martyred for their religion, yet churches continued to be erected, and the knowledge of the gospel to be extended to many distant parts of the earth. The blood of the martyrs which was shed by the hands of the heathen, instead of diminishing the

number of the disciples of Christ, seemed only to be the seed of a more numerous and more abundant harvest of his worshippers. The firmness and constancy with which they endured the severest and most ignominious torments and death, led many of the heathen around them, first to the knowledge, and then to the practice of the same religion.

But I fear I am dwelling too long upon these things. To trace the rise and establishment of our holy religion, and of the places in which we meet together to perform its public services, is a subject of deep interest. But I must not forget that I have other matters to discourse to you about, closely connected with our circumstances here this day. Suffice it, then, that upon this subject I add but one short word further:—Christianity has become, by degrees, the established religion of almost every civilized nation in the world, and by the mercy and goodness of God it has long been flourishing and increasing in

our own favoured land. And on this spot, my christian brethren, there has been a church raised up and appointed for the public service of God, where there was never one before; and in this place also, I trust, there may be a congregation of his faithful worshippers, and a succession of redeemed and immortal souls, instructed, edified, and prepared for the inheritance and enjoyment of his eternal kingdom.

I proceed now to the consideration of other particulars. And if I shall sometimes have to speak of myself and my intentions, I trust the circumstance of my first preaching to you, and of my coming to live among you, will be considered a sufficient apology for it.

When a clergyman enters upon the duties of a new parish, the people are generally anxious to learn, how they are likely to be satisfied with their minister. I assure you, my christian friends, you cannot be more desirous than I am, that I should give you satisfaction, and that I should

approve myself before you as an industrious and zealous servant of Jesus Christ, and a faithful preacher of his gospel. It is my most earnest wish, and it will be my constant prayer to Almighty God, that I may be an humble instrument in his hands of doing good among you; and it will be my unceasing study and care, and also my greatest comfort and happiness, to devote my best talents and to spend my best strength, in labouring for the welfare of those who are now committed to my charge.

I am well aware that the christian minister has a sacred and responsible commission entrusted to him, and an arduous duty to perform. And likewise that he sometimes appears to meet with no encouragement for his exertions, and no fruit from his labours; that his counsel and advice are occasionally despised, his instructions disregarded, his endeavours to do good frustrated. But my heavenly Master has also taught me, not to be discouraged, not

to be cast down at these things; but to labour and persevere, in spite of any who may oppose themselves; and to give all diligence to convert the sinful, to strengthen the weak-hearted, to encourage the humble and lowly-minded, to bring back the transgressor from the error of his ways, and to point out to him the beauty of holiness, and the blessedness of walking in the paths of religion; to preach the glad tidings of salvation to sinners, and to endeavour to build them up in the faith of Christ, and to establish their hearts in obedience to his gospel. These are the duties, which, as a servant of God, and a messenger of Jesus Christ, I am sent among you to perform. And whether they be attended to, or neglected; whether they be received with carelessness and indifference, or with meek and docible minds, I shall always endeavour to perform them with faithfulness, and to cause them to minister to the improvement and happiness of my flock.

If I were to suppose that I should give

entire satisfaction, and to be well spoken of by every one, I should greatly deceive myself. Our blessed Lord himself, who spake as never man spake; who taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes,—not as the common ministers of religion; and whose life was a life of spotless innocency and unblemished purity; yet greatly experienced the contradiction, and perverseness, and ingratitude of those whom he came to instruct and enlighten, and for whose sake he was content to be crucified. And in like manner, the ministers of Christ must not expect their way to be smooth and unbroken, or that their labour will not be sometimes lost, and their usefulness prevented. There are ungodly men, and those who oppose themselves, in all places. As it was in the times of the Apostles, so is it now. There are some men who will not endure sound doctrine; whose minds, being filled with prejudice and presumption, are closed against the strongest arguments of reason and scripture,

and against the clearest convictions of their own consciences. There are some also who neither love God nor his ways, and it cannot be expected that they should have much esteem for his ministers. The ministers are too faithful for these people, and deal too plainly with them: they tell them of their faults, and reprove them for their evil practices,—and this is an offence unto them. They cannot bear to be rebuked for their wickedness: they cannot suffer that the minister of religion should set himself to observe their conduct, and warn them of the misery they are preparing for themselves. And therefore he has little favour to expect at the hands of such persons.

But, my brethren, if I do indeed meet with such wayward and perverse dispositions as these in my parish, am I to slacken my labours among them on that account? Am I to cease to strive with them, and let them follow the bent of their own will, without restraint, and without sounding

in their ears the warning voice of gospel truth? No: God forbid that I should be so careless of their souls, or should so betray the trust with which I am charged! I am sent among you to preach the gospel of the Redeemer's kingdom; and, both to the humble and well-disposed christian, and also to the openly profane and ungodly, that gospel must be made known, in all its purity, and in all its strength. It must be preached and set forth, "in season, and out of season:" the message of God must be faithfully delivered into your ears, "whether ye will hear, or whether ye will forbear."

But whatever vexations and discouragements the christian minister has to encounter, they are often far more than overbalanced, by the purest and most heartfelt consolations. If there be some who think lightly of his office, who disregard his instructions, or who care not for the things of religion, there are yet others of a very different character; others who in a greater or less degree, hunger and thirst

after righteousness as the hart panteth for the cooling water brooks, and whose desire is to walk humbly before the Lord, and to live as becomes those who have been called to the profession of his holy religion. Yes, my brethren, there are happily some, who with the Psalmist David would rather be doorkeepers in the house of their God, than dwell even in palaces of wickedness. Some there are, and these not a few, whose feet are eagerly bent towards his sacred dwelling on his own holy day; whose hearts are poured out before him in devout prayer and supplication; who listen with earnestness and attention to the lessons of heavenly wisdom, and “receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save their souls.” These are they, for whom the minister of Jesus does not labour in vain; who receive the seed of the gospel which he sows, “into honest and good hearts, and bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, some an hundred-fold.” These are they in whom he delights,

who bring to him his best reward, and fill his soul with the truest happiness. These are they, for whom he gladly spends himself, and for whose eternal welfare he ceases not day and night, to study and to pray. These, in a word, are *the seals of his ministry, his joy in the Lord, and his crown of rejoicing.*

That joy, my christian hearers; that crown of rejoicing I hope to find in you. I hope you will always be ready, with willing and cheerful minds, to present yourselves every sabbath morning at this house of God, which has this day been opened for the performance of his public worship. I trust that the doctrines of eternal life, which I shall endeavour to set before you from this place, will be attended with the blessing of God, and will fall upon serious and believing hearts, to strengthen your faith in Him who is the only Saviour, and to draw you to the practice of a holy and religious conversation in the ways and works of godliness. I trust in God, that this church

which has been built and set apart for his service, will be sanctified by the presence of his Holy Spirit ; and that a congregation of his faithful worshippers will be here established, to join together in his praises, to pray for his mercies, and to be fed and nourished with that spiritual and heavenly food, which the Lord has appointed for your growth and improvement in grace, and for the health and sustenance of your souls. It is my earnest and most anxious hope that many precious souls may here be led to an acquaintance with the Saviour of sinners ; that they may be brought to know, and practice in their day, the things which belong to their everlasting peace ; and at length be prepared and made ready for the happy possession of that glorious rest, which is reserved in heaven for the faithful people of God, in his own blessed presence for ever.

These are the things, my friends,—these are the works and duties, the practice and observance of which will be the purest

source of comfort and happiness, both to the minister and to his flock.

Let us all then be found engaged in doing these things,—in performing these duties. Let us, with the help of our gracious God, and in humble dependence on the influences of his blessed Spirit, be sincere and in earnest in working out our own salvation, and in steadily pursuing the concerns of eternity. The ways of the world are often the ways of sin, and the evil and corrupt nature of man's heart too frequently incline him to follow them. But let us ever remember, that the ways of religion alone are ways of pleasantness and peace; and that the preparation of the soul for a future state of existence is the one thing needful, the great business and end of our life, which it behoves us to attend to in preference to every earthly consideration, and to pursue with the most diligent and prayerful perseverance.

Pray then, my brethren, I beseech you,—pray for me, that I may have grace and

strength to preach to you the gospel of Jesus Christ with simplicity and godly sincerity; that I may be able rightly to divide the word of truth; to shew you the blessedness, and to stir you up to the practice of a religious life; and to dwell in the midst of you as it becomes the servant of the Lord, to whom is committed the spiritual guidance of his people, and who has to be careful, and watch for their souls, as one that must give an account of them at the day of judgment.

And pray, in like manner, for yourselves, that the preaching of the word, and the means and opportunities of grace may not be sent among you in vain: but that you may receive with meekness and gladness of heart the benefits of religious instruction, and may become, not hearers only, but doers of the word;—not the disciples of Jesus as to outward form and profession only, but having inwardly in your hearts the spirit and power of godliness; that so ye may be in reality the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

Before I conclude this discourse, there are one or two subjects connected with my office, which I would briefly notice. And that which appears to be of the greatest importance is the education, particularly the *religious* education of the children of the poor. My attention will be especially directed to the establishment of a Sunday School, of which I purpose to take the superintendence and management, so far as my other duties will permit me to do so. Whatever assistance may be required for the support of the school beyond what the parents themselves can pay, I trust those who have it in their power will not be backward to give. As to the punctual and good attendance of the children, I must look chiefly to the parents themselves to accomplish that object, but I would earnestly impress it upon your minds, my hearers, that nothing will tend so much to the welfare and happiness of your children, as early training them to habits of discipline and obedience, and imprinting upon their

youthful hearts the lessons of holiness and virtue, and leading them gently and gradually to the knowledge of that compassionate Redeemer, who said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of God.” I would gladly say more upon this topic, but the time at present forbids me to enlarge further. When the school shall be opened for the reception of the children, I shall then endeavour to address to you a discourse suited to the occasion.

The next subject I would notice is this. I understand there are dissenters among us ; and I have thought it better at once to express my sentiments respecting them. If I did not consider the Church of England the purest and most apostolick community of christians in this kingdom, I should ill deserve the office which I bear in her household. But however I may grieve that there should be divisions in the church, and that men should separate from her communion, I yet do not feel that I have a right

to condemn any man who worships God according to the dictates of his own conscience, provided he has used the best means in his power, to have his conscience rightly informed upon the subject, which is a matter of the deepest importance to him. And therefore, though I trust, through the blessing of God, that I shall be zealous and indefatigable in the service of that church, of which I am an humble minister ; yet I shall always endeavour to live with those who conscientiously differ from her, in the spirit of harmony and peace, and on terms of christian charity and goodwill. I have no personal animosity to the dissenters, and I am not disposed to shut them out from my heart because they differ from me in religious opinions. I rejoice in whatever good they have been able to effect, and I am content that they should have the privilege of conducting their spiritual concerns in their own way. I hope, at the same time, that those who are in this neighbourhood will set up no needless or

jealous opposition to the church : it does not become any one to have an overweening conceit of the superiority of his own system, or a bigoted attachment to his own way of thinking : and in this case, an observance of the apostolick precepts would always be beneficial ; “Let all things be done decently and in order ;” and, “Let brotherly love continue.” I would conciliate the esteem and good opinion of my dissenting fellow-christians, not by any compromise of my own principles, but by assuring them, and by endeavouring to prove to them, that I am anxious for their welfare and happiness, equally with those who are more particularly my own flock ; and that my constant prayer to God for them is, “That they may be saved.”

But I now feel that I must hasten to a conclusion. The Lord has, this day, conferred a great and inestimable blessing upon this place ; and I trust his people will receive it with thankful hearts, and strive to become partakers of the advantages

which it holds out to them. A Tabernacle has been raised in the wilderness ; and O ! let not the weekly call of the church bell to the house of prayer fall upon careless or indifferent ears ; but gladly hasten to obey the summons, and attend to the preaching of the word. For my own part, I shall endeavour, with the blessing of divine grace, to spread that word abroad in your hearts, to the best of my understanding and ability. I shall also strive so to live among you, as to set you an example of christian conduct and conversation, taking care, that whilst I preach to others, I myself may not be a cast-away.

The ministers of Christ, however, are not exempt from failings and infirmities more than other men ; and whatever errors and deficiencies I may be found to labour under, I must crave from my parishioners their candid and favourable judgment of them. I shall keep a watchful eye over the concerns of my parish, and shall be forward to encourage virtue and rebuke vice where-

soever they may be found. I shall declare to my people the whole counsel and will of God, without fear, and without regard to worldly favour ; not seeking the praise, or trying to please the fancies of men,—but to save their souls. The high and the low, the rich and the poor, will be alike the objects of my solicitude and care, for they all have souls equally precious in the sight of God ; and the faithful servant of Christ, in the exercise of his ministerial duties, does not pay respect to the distinction of worldly circumstances.

Let us then, my brethren, endeavour to make the connection which has this day commenced between us, a mutual advantage and happiness to us all : that when I shall be called upon to give an account of my flock, and you to answer for the use which you have made of the means of grace ; we may both be able to do it with joy ; and that *he who sows, and they who reap, may eternally rejoice together.*

SERMON II.

A CALL TO THOSE WHO ARE SPIRITUALLY
ASLEEP.

Ephes. ch. 5. v. 14.

Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

IN the first times of Christianity, when our blessed Lord himself and his holy apostles were the preachers and promulgators of the gospel, we learn that there were many persons so exceedingly indifferent to their ministrations, that they seemed to regard all their exertions for the salvation of mankind as a matter of little or no importance, and upon which it was not worth while for them to spend a thought or reflection.

The son of God might exert his divine power, and perform his astonishing miracles before their eyes; yet were there many among those who followed him, in whose breasts no other sentiment was produced, but that of envy and ill-will; and whose reproachful observations shewed the blindness of their understandings, and the hardness of their hearts. “Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?” said they; “Is not this the carpenter’s son?”—“And they were offended at him.”

And with regard to the apostles;—after the most wonderful effusion of the Holy Ghost upon them, in the shape of cloven tongues of fire, on the day of Pentecost, and when they had begun to address the multitude in the language of their respective countries; “These men,” said the Jews, “are full of new wine,”—although it was but the third hour of the day, or nine o’clock in the morning. And on many other occasions, if the people were induced to pay any attention to the apostles at all, it was only

that they might revile them, and oppose themselves to their doctrine, or even persecute them, and stone them to death.

It is true that there were some who believed the word, and embraced the doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ; and who continually strove to glorify God, both in the holiness of life which they led, and even in dying for the sake of their religion. But these, when taken from the great multitudes which were frequently assembled together to hear our Lord and his apostles, left a vast majority, who were either decided and bitter enemies to the gospel, or totally careless and indifferent about it.

Such are the facts which we gather from the sacred scriptures; and if we did not know the corruption of human nature, and the perversity and deceitfulness of the heart of man, we could hardly believe the account to be true. But alas! we have too clear and undisputed evidence of the fact. Our own times—our own people—our own hearts, are plain and manifest witnesses of it.

The same gospel is now addressed to the people, which was at the first preached by the Lord and his appointed messengers. The succeeding ministers of Christ are still engaged in teaching, and pressing upon mankind, the truths and duties of their heavenly Master's religion. But if they were often indifferent to the exertions of the Master; so may we expect that they will likewise be indifferent to the ministrations of his servants. The same corruption of their nature; the same hardness of heart; the same perversity of temper and disposition; the same indifference to spiritual things, are still too plainly exhibited by the great mass of mankind, who continue to resist the advantageous influences of Christianity, and check the progress of religion, and the increase of piety and holiness in the world. The glad tidings of the gospel; the message of salvation is regularly sounded in the churches. The word of God is read and explained. The truths of religion are

illustrated and enforced. The awful concerns of eternity are faithfully and solemnly set forth. Yet what numbers are there in the world, for whom these things are done in vain! what numbers are there who never hear their sound—who never come within reach of their warning but salutary voice—who shut their ears to the healing power of the gospel-charmer, charm he never so wisely. Alas! for such as these we can only pray. Our words reach not their ears: our instructions affect not their hearts: the gospel, to them, is a sealed book, and they have no desire to become acquainted with it. They live without God, without religion; unconscious of the awful judgment which awaits them, and utterly unprepared for the important part which they will have to bear in it.

And yet, even among those who do in some measure attend to these things: among those who profess to be the disciples and followers of Jesus Christ; who come to the house of God to hear his word, and

to join in the public offices of devotion ;— even among *those*, how few are there who attend to these things as they ought ; or who consider a faithful exercise of their religion, or an anxious endeavour for the welfare of their souls of that great importance which it behoves them to do. How few are there who love the Lord with all their heart, with all their mind, and with all their soul ; and worship him in spirit and in truth, with that fervency of feeling, and that intenseness of piety and devotion, which it becometh those to do who have taken upon them the profession of christians, and call themselves by the holy name of the Saviour :—how few are there, even among those, to whom, on account of their carelessness, their lukewarmness, or their indifference, the words of our text may not be justly addressed ; “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

In further discoursing from these words, I shall endeavour to explain and illustrate

their meaning, both as to their figurative, and their literal signification; drawing some practical inferences from the subject as we proceed, and concluding with a short exhortation.

“Awake thou that sleepest.” This is not intended to signify natural sleep;—it signifies moral sleep—spiritual sleep—carnal security:—it signifies a state of sin. When a person is asleep, he is generally unconscious of what is passing around him. Though danger threaten, or destruction come near him, he does not fear it, for he sees it not, and knows not of its approach. So is it with the sleep of the soul: so is it with the carnal and worldly-minded person, whose eyes are closed upon the concerns of religion, and who is not feelingly awake to the necessity of labouring for his salvation, and of preparing himself for a world to come. The things which to him should be of the utmost consequence, he seems to be utterly careless about. He appears to be quite unconscious that the day of grace

is rapidly passing away ; and the fear of what may be his portion hereafter does not disturb his mind. The danger that threatens him is greater than every other danger, because it will overwhelm him, not for a time, but to eternity. Thus does he go heedlessly onward : anxious, and careful, and troubled, it may be, about many things belonging to this life ; but utterly neglectful of the one thing needful ; and not mindful to make a speedy and decided choice of that better part, which would not be taken away from him.

The worst circumstance attending a person who is asleep in sin, or in a state of carnal security, is, that he is not sensible of his danger. He fancies that all is going on rightly with him, and flatters himself that he is safe. He has, perhaps, laid down *some* rule for himself with respect to religion, and determined to attend to some few of its duties : and although the voice of conscience, or the word of truth may sometimes whisper to his heart that he is

building his faith upon the sand, and that his religion is nothing but a shadow, or an empty name ; yet he presently endeavours to get rid of the unwelcome monitor, and to stifle the apprehension of evil consequences, in a return to his former habits of lukewarmness and indifference.

It is to persons of this description, that the words of the text are particularly addressed. “Awake thou that sleepest.” Awake from thy dream of false security : awake from thy vain presumption : trust not in the confidence of thy deceitful and treacherous heart ; but be converted from thy sinfulness, and turn with sincerity unto God : forsake the delusive path which is leading thee to destruction, and enter on the strait and narrow way which leadeth unto life : embrace the religion of thy Redeemer, not in its outward profession only, but in its inward purity and holiness : not in an observance alone of its external forms and ordinances, but with the heart and understanding ; cleaving with humility

and devout affection to that which is good ; and striving in future to be of the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, and to live in conformity to his gospel : “Awake to righteousness, and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God, I speak this to your shame.”

Again, the text saith, “Arise from the dead.” There is a spiritual death from which we should arise ; and the circumstances in this case are similar to those signified by the sleep in sin, which I have already taken notice of. St. Paul saith, that “He that liveth in pleasure (or in sin) is dead while he liveth.” That is, in the first place, he is utterly insensible to that which is the truest source of the enjoyment of his life : he is dead to the blessings and advantages of religion ; dead to the feelings of piety and devotion ; dead to the comforts and consolations which the gospel affords to the weary and afflicted ; to the sick and the unfortunate : dead to all its promises ; to all its joyful hopes ; and to

the expectation of future happiness and glory.

In the next place he is in a state of separation from Christ, who is the life of every Christian; for if a person continue dead in trespasses and sin, how can he have any interest in the Son of God? “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?—and what communion hath light with darkness?—and what concord hath Christ with Belial?” “He therefore that abideth in sin, abideth in darkness, and is dead while he liveth.” To such persons the passage in our text is addressed: “Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Arise from that state of sin and unbelief in which thou art buried: shake off that moral depravity which presseth thy soul into the dust, and come unto Jesus Christ, and he shall give thee light: he will dispel the spiritual blindness which has been reigning in thy mind: he will enlighten thy understanding that thou mayest behold the wondrous

things of his law ; and he will spread abroad in thy heart the glorious light of his everlasting gospel.

To those of us, my brethren, who are content with an *outward profession* of religion ;—who are negligent and unheedful of the power which it should exercise over the heart, and of the fruits of righteousness which it should produce in our life and conduct ;—to those the invitation in the text will strictly apply. Too many there are, it is to be feared, who consider the practice of religion as a thing but of very secondary importance : too many who think ;—or at least, by the little attention they pay to it, who *seem* to think, that it is enough if it occupy some small portion of their leisure hours ; and that it should not interfere with the seasons of business or pleasure, which they consider of much more consequence. Too many of those who have entered on the profession of Christianity, are satisfied if they have set their feet just within its portals, and care

not to press earnestly forward, to obtain the mark of the prize of their high calling. But these ideas and opinions are delusive and dangerous in the extreme. They are the sentiments of the carnally-minded, of the worldly-wise, and not of the faithful servant of Jesus Christ. They are the sentiments and opinions of those, who would gladly persuade themselves that they are christians, without living up to the rules of their holy profession: who have the form of godliness, without the power of it; and who suppose, that by a partial observance of a few of its obligations, they will cover the defects and blemishes of their character, and obtain a title to the rewards of virtue, and to the inheritance of the beloved children of the Most High.

But let us not deceive ourselves with such vain thoughts. Let us not imagine that we are true christians merely because we live in the midst of a christian country, or because we attend to the forms and ceremonies of religion. It is no easy matter

to be true christians. It requires much exertion, much care and watchfulness, and much mortification of our wishes. It requires that we should often act in direct opposition to the natural bias of our minds, and bring into subjection the greatest desires, and most predominant feelings of our hearts. It requires that we should frequently make a sacrifice of those things which are highly esteemed by the world; and that we should learn, with the holy apostle, to count all things but loss that we may win Christ, and be found in him at his appearing. However we may differ from the rest of the world;—whatever disesteem and reproach may be bestowed upon us;—whatever singularity of conduct may be attributed to us on that account; we must still be faithful to our profession, and suffer not these things to move us: we must fight the good fight of faith, in spite of the mockery of the scorner, or the taunts and revilings of the unbeliever; and in spite also of the example

or persuasions of those who would have us to be only *half* christians. We must deeply consider the end of our calling, and steadily persevere in the observance of its sacred and straight-forward duties, through evil report, and good report. We must be christians, not only outwardly by name and in profession, but inwardly in our affections. Our religion must be that of the heart; *in the spirit, and not in the letter*, WHOSE PRAISE IS NOT OF MEN, BUT OF GOD.

The literal signification which I intimated to be conveyed in the words of the text, and which I can now notice only very briefly, is that of awaking from the sleep of the grave, and of being restored by the resurrection from the dust of death, at the final and glorious advent of the Redeemer. This, indeed, is the principal doctrine of our religion; and the main point which we ought to have continually in view, in all the vicissitudes of our pilgrimage,—in all the chances and changes to which our

mortal life is subject. Without this expectation, our religion would be vain. Without the assurance of a world beyond the present; a world in which every one shall receive the just recompense of his conduct; a world in which the humble, pious, and faithful believer shall obtain a blessed and unfading inheritance:—without such a consoling, such a cheering prospect as this, many of the restraints and mortifications which Christianity enjoins, would be little better than a mockery, and an insult to us. “If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” But blessed be God, he has left us no room to doubt in this matter. We are assured that there will be a resurrection, both of the soul and of the body. We are assured, that though our body be laid in the grave and see corruption, yet shall it come forth at the voice of the Son of God, and be again united to the soul. This is the hope of the christian; and this hope supports him under all the trials he

may endure. If he be poor and needy, he knows that it is but for a short season, and that hereafter he shall enjoy the riches of God's heavenly kingdom. If he suffer sickness, affliction, or disease, he knows that it is only for a little moment, and that it will work out for him in another world, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. If he is reproached on account of his religion, he remembers with satisfaction the words of his beloved Master; "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake; rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."

Thus, in whatever can befall him, the faithful christian rests secure in the hope of that state of eternal bliss, where pain, and sickness, and sorrow, shall visit him no more for ever.

But though the prospect of another world affords the highest consolation and comfort to the sincere and lowly disciple of Christ;

yet to the ungodly and careless sinner, it can impart nothing but apprehension and terror. We know that there shall be a resurrection both of the just, and the unjust. "They that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Every individual of the human race, whatever may have been his character in this world, must obey the summons; must answer for his conduct at the bar of his Almighty and impartial Judge, and receive his everlasting and unchangeable portion,—either *in heaven, with the glorified saints and servants of the Redeemer*;—or *in hell, with the accursed spirits of darkness!*

With such a prospect before us, my brethren, what manner of persons ought we to be? O what folly, what madness it is, if we hesitate to make that choice, which will establish our feet on the Rock of Salvation! If we give to the world our heart

and affections, what permanent happiness shall we obtain from it in return? What recompense shall we receive from the ungodly, if we follow a multitude to do evil? “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Let those who are living in allowed habits of sin,—whether in the practice of gross wickedness, or in a state of carelessness and indifference about spiritual concerns, consider the warning admonition of the text;—“Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

Let us all, my hearers, give that attention to these words which they demand of us. Let us go home with the sound of them in our ears, and with a deep meditation upon them in our hearts. Let us rouse ourselves from our spiritual security, and beware that we rest not satisfied with the *shadow* of religion, and lose the *substance* from our grasp. Let us come fervently unto the Saviour, and he will

receive us, and quicken us : he will lighten our eyes that we sleep not in death, and will lead us unto life everlasting. Let us often meditate upon our resurrection, and be solicitous above all things to prepare our souls for eternity. O let us strive, my brethren, not in our own strength, but in that strength which shall be made perfect in our weakness ; and by the help and power of that grace, which will at all times be sufficient for us :—let us anxiously and earnestly strive, that when the day of our examination shall come,—when the Saviour, the righteous Judge shall appear, and assign to every individual of the human race his final and unchangeable condition ;—let us strive, that in that day, *our* lot may be cast with theirs, *who through faith and patience shall inherit the promises.*

SERMON III.

TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

John ch. 13. v. 34.

*“A new commandment I give unto you,
that ye love one another.”*

THE evangelist from whose gospel I have chosen my text for this day, has ever been distinguished by the peculiar and honourable title of “the beloved disciple of Jesus :” and he appears himself to have exercised no very small share of that estimable quality, of which he experienced so large a portion from his honoured Master. And indeed we perceive throughout the whole of his gospel, that he loves most to dwell upon those actions and discourses of the Redeemer, wherein his affection and compassionate

kindness to sinners are so strongly and so beautifully exhibited.

The commandment which our blessed Lord gave to his disciples was something very different from what was generally,—indeed I may say, almost universally acted upon in the world: and had the spirit of this divine precept been as widely felt and exercised as the knowledge of the gospel has been spread among mankind; how different would have been the picture which the world would have presented to us, from what we see it to be at this day! Wars and fightings, malice and revenge, hatred and animosities, would in a great measure have been banished from many a fair portion of the earth. But the spreading of the gospel message does not always carry with it its pure and holy spirit to the hearts of those who hear it, and profess to embrace it; and therefore, in too many instances, men remain the same as they have been from the beginning of the world. You all know, my brethren, what was the practice

of the Jews with respect to their behaviour towards other men. Their maxim was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." And among those nations of antiquity which had attained to a high state of learning, civilization, and refinement, the passion of revenge and retaliation of injuries was cherished as one of the noblest moral virtues.

The Lord Jesus was sent from the God of love, to change the principles and habits of mankind; to rescue them from the corrupt maxims and vain traditions by which they were guided; and to infuse into their hearts principles of benevolence and goodwill, which should extend to every individual of the human race. The religion which he established on the earth, every where instructs us, that whatever *other* christian graces may flow from the faith of the gospel, yet the crown and consummation of the whole is this:—*Peace and goodwill toward men—brotherly kindness—charity.*

“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.”

I purpose to consider our obligation to observe this precept, both with regard to what we owe mankind in general, and also in some of those narrower and more confined relations in which we all stand to each other, and are connected together.

And may that Divine Spirit, without whose aid all our labour is in vain, so shed amongst us his blessed influences; that I may so preach, and you may so hear, that our understandings may be opened, our minds enlightened, and our hearts edified and built up; and disposed and resolved to rest upon that grand system of our faith and holy religion, which hath for its foundation the inspired prophets and holy apostles and martyrs; and for its chief corner stone the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

With respect to the commandment to love one another, if we take it in its widest signification—and we are taught from many

parts of scripture that we ought so to take it—then will it have reference to every human being which Almighty God has created; and the sentiment will extend, from the centre of our own homes to the remotest corner of this habitable world. What a grand conception is this, my brethren, of the commandment exercised in such a manner! To think that all people on the earth, whether Jew or Gentile, whether bond or free, whatever their name or nation, their customs or their languages,—from the frozen shores of the north, to the most distant islands in the southern ocean;—to think that all these, collectively and individually, shall find a place and a sentiment of love in the heart of the christian! How does it elevate the soul of him who entertains such a feeling, and acts upon it, and produce within him the similitude of his Maker! How does it raise him up beyond the narrow, selfish, beggarly pursuits and practices, which are the element of the

men of this world; and which they are content to esteem their happiness, their heaven, and their God! No one, indeed, but the true disciple of Jesus can fully appreciate the excellence of this commandment; and none but he is able to exercise it in all its extent.

We then, my hearers, who profess to be the disciples of Christ, know that this commandment was given for our obedience. And let us remember that the love which is here inculcated is not a cold or barren feeling; but a lively, active principle; exercising itself not only in wishes, but as far as may be, in deeds of beneficence and goodwill. The human race, however scattered over the face of the earth, and differing from each other in outward circumstances, are all creatures of that God whom we worship,—all children of that heavenly Being whom it is our privilege and happiness to call our Father; and they have all imperishable souls, the price of whose redemption has been paid, and which

are all capable of being saved and eternally blessed by that Friend of sinners, in whose precious blood we hope our own sins will all be washed away.

How then, it may be asked, can this principle be acted on, so as to be of use to those who are separated from us even to the ends of the earth? I may observe in general, that the habits and interests of mankind so connect and amalgamate them together, that opportunities frequently occur, even to private and obscure individuals, of doing good to their distant fellow-creatures. Our chief anxiety indeed as christians, should be that all mankind might obtain like precious faith as ourselves; and therefore, as far as we are able, we should strengthen the hands of the missionaries, and give our assistance to those who are carrying over the world the glad tidings of salvation. An opportunity of this kind lately occurred here, and even the small sum collected in this place would procure for those who are ready to perish

for lack of spiritual food, several copies of of that gospel, which is the best anchor of our hopes, and the title deed of our inheritance.

But however unable we may be to do good to mankind in other respects, there is yet one way in which we all can help them. We can offer up to God our humble and fervent prayers for them: we can beseech him to send forth his light and his truth, to enlighten those that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death: we can pray that he would cause his saving health to be known unto all nations, and the sound of his glorious gospel to be heard in every corner of the most distant lands: we can entreat him that he would hasten the time, when all the kingdoms of the world shall be turned unto the Lord, and become the kingdoms of the Redeemer.

I shall now briefly notice our obligation to love one another as it respects our circumstances as a nation; as subjects of the same monarch, and fellow-citizens of the same country.

We are exhorted by St. Peter to honour all men, to love the brotherhood, to fear God, and honour the king; to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or to those who are appointed to govern in his name.

The blessings and advantages which we have enjoyed in this country, under the form of government which at present exists, have been numerous and important. And if we compare our superiority in this respect with other nations, we shall rather rejoice that we have so much to be truly thankful for, than murmur or repine at some real or fancied grievances which we desire to be removed. However desirable it may be that all men should think justly, and act uprightly, and that the heart of a nation should be as the heart of one man, we can scarcely expect that such will be the case in our time. For so long as men are under the dominion of the prince of this world; the spirit of pride and ambition,

the love of wealth and power, the desire of fame and of mere human applause, will bring opposite opinions and conflicting interests together, which will spread, over the kingdom, more or less of turmoil and discord; and consequently, more or less of trouble and unhappiness. But whatever storms of political or moral evil may at any time agitate and harass our land, the path of the christian is clearly marked out, and will not be difficult to perceive. "Fear God, and honour the king." This is the exhortation of that apostle whom Christ was pleased to call the Rock of his Church. These words contain the essence of our duty, to our God, and to our country. In a spiritual sense, we must endeavour, through evil report, and through good report, to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called as christians. And with respect to our worldly occupations, we must strive to do our duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call us. It will sometimes happen, that the influence of political

and worldly strife will reach even into this retired place. In such cases our wisest part will generally be, to keep quiet at our own homes, and to be doing our own business. Circumstances indeed may arise, which will imperatively call upon us to perform a positive and active duty to our country; and if so, let us beware that we are not guided by the mere feeling of temporal interest: let us take every care to inform our judgments aright: let us imbue our minds, and establish our hearts with wise and holy principles; and let us act up to those principles, whatever may be the issue. And here, the precept of our blessed Lord to love one another will come forcibly to our aid. Let us not however allow this sentiment to degenerate into weakness: let us not suffer evil to remain, if it be in our power to remove it, out of a mistaken kindness for those who pursue it. We know that whatever other benefits and prosperity may be derived to the nation, the greatest blessing which it can receive would be the

universal flourishing of Christ's kingdom. Let it be our desire and endeavour to accomplish this object as far as we may. The more that the hearts of men are brought under the dominion of the spirit of Christianity, the greater by far will be the sum of happiness which they will enjoy. We are bound then to give all encouragement and assistance to such as attempt so desirable a consummation. And if, as I said in the last case, we can do nothing more, we can yet present before the Lord, our humble and earnest supplication. We can pray for the welfare, and most for the *spiritual* welfare of our country. We can pray for our king, and all that are in authority under him, that God would vouchsafe to enlighten the understandings, and influence the hearts of all men in power, and make them act in his faith and fear, for the benefit of all degrees, and all conditions of men. And we can pray also for the blessing of God upon our sanctuary,—upon that branch of

Christ's Church which he has been pleased to plant in this nation :—that, as we trust and believe she has hitherto been, so she may continue yet more and more, the guide and pillar of the truth, the publisher and dispenser of the blessings of Christ's gospel among the people of this land.

In going on thus in our straightforward course, we may encounter opposition, we may meet with many enemies : the evil will sometimes preponderate over the good, and wicked men will oppress and tyrannize over the just. But let us never forget the commandment in the text, to love one another. If we are grieved at the evil deeds of men, let us yet remember that they have souls, and that when they set themselves against the truth, they know not what they do. Our way is clear, and that is, to take up our cross meekly, and pray for them. We are the children of sinful Adam as well as they ; and if our faith have been firmer, and our obedience more perfect, it is not of ourselves, or of our own strength, but from

Him alone, who is the Author, and the Giver of all good to men.

I shall now consider the commandment to love one another in a narrower point of view; under circumstances which come more immediately home to ourselves, and which, therefore, will possess a deeper interest both with you and myself. I shall consider it as it respects our relation as a minister and his parishioners,—as a shepherd and his flock. And surely if this divine precept be binding, and productive of good in any case, it must be in a still higher degree in the sacred connexion which exists between a christian minister and a christian congregation; upon him, who labours and watches for their souls, as one that must give an account of them; and upon them who are his children in the faith of the gospel.

In considering, then, my christian friends, the sacred connexion which I trust will henceforth subsist between us, I must necessarily take notice in the first place, of

some of the duties which are incumbent upon me as your minister, and which, indeed, in a greater or less degree will mutually affect us both.

Believe me then my brethren when I tell you, that my heart's desire, and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved. And not only so, but I am anxious that I may be the humble instrument in his hand, of bringing you to his salvation. I am anxious to devote the talents with which he has blessed me, to your best interests, and to *be* every thing, and to *do* every thing, which may increase your growth in grace, and bring you nearer to his heavenly kingdom. For this purpose, as well as I am able, I shall set before you from this place the truth as it is in Jesus. I will keep back from you no part of his precious doctrine ; I will speak into your ears the whole counsel and will of God. The unspeakable mercy of God to mankind ; the free and unmerited grace of redeeming love to lost and perishing sinners, will be the

principal theme of all my preaching to you; and whatever other subjects may be occasionally introduced into my discourses, they will all be subordinate to the grand doctrine of the gospel—salvation through faith in the blood of Jesus. That the seed of the gospel, which by God's blessing I shall sow from this place, may not be sown in vain, your own hearts, my brethren, your own feelings and wishes must cooperate with mine. Endeavour at all times to give to the preaching of the word that attention which it always demands of you, and receive it with a teachable disposition, and meekness of mind. It will sometimes happen, in the course of my exhortations to you, that I shall have to set before you the heinousness of sin, and the threatenings which God has denounced upon impenitent sinners. If at any time I should seem to say what is offensive to your minds, or what may sound harsh in your ears, take it, I beseech you, in good part, and believe that it is said in love to your souls. Faithless, indeed, and

profitless would be my discourses, if they never brought a pang to the consciences of my hearers—and if they did not sometimes send you to your homes, sad, and discontented, and dissatisfied with your state. But do not suppose, beloved brethren, that I would willingly afflict your hearts, without at the same time bringing you to that fountain for sin and sorrow, in which all may wash and be happy. It is, indeed, the blessing of the gospel, that though the word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the soul, and cutting asunder the bonds of Satan in the heart; yet the same word speaks pardon and peace to the penitent mourner, and fills him with a consolation and gladness which nothing else can bestow.

It is also my purpose, as occasion may offer, to visit you at your homes, to talk to you of the things which concern both your temporal and spiritual welfare, and to be in all respects your watchful shepherd, and faithful pastor.

In the discharge of all these duties, my christian friends, I need your cooperation, and I seek your assistance, and your kind encouragement. A heavy responsibility is laid upon me; an arduous work is committed to my charge. Of myself I feel utterly unable to accomplish this work, and though the appointed servant of God, to bear to you his message of salvation, I yet feel that I am a frail sinful being like yourselves, subject to the same temptations, and labouring under the same infirmities both of the flesh and of the spirit. In addition then to every other assistance which you can give me, I entreat you to let me have the help of your prayers. Pray to God for me that I may be able to speak the word among you as I ought to speak it: that it may have free course and be glorified, and that I may be able both to exhort and convince the gainsayers, and to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. I do not speak these words indifferently, brethren: I do not ask for your prayers as a matter of course.

O no ! Under an awful apprehension of the responsibility which attaches to me : under a feeling sense of personal unworthiness, and of the necessity of constant and unceasing aid from that blessed Spirit, who alone can support, and guide, and strengthen me for my work ;—in this spirit do I entreat your faithful prayers for me. And what good christian will refuse or neglect to beseech the blessing of God upon his minister, that he would strengthen his hands and preserve him from evil ; that he would give him grace faithfully to preach the word, and gradually but surely to build up his congregation in the faith and practice of Christ's religion. And who is there that would doubt of such faithful prayers being heard, and answered with a blessing, both to the minister and his people ? The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ear is always open to their humble supplication for good. It were indeed an insult to his mercy, and a disbelief of every page of his holy word to suppose otherwise.

Let us then brethren always endeavour to go on our way in such a temper and in such a spirit as this ; mutually assisting, mutually encouraging, and fervently praying for each other. So shall we pay obedience to the commandment of the Lord, “to love one another.” And thus proceeding onward in the path of christian affection and brotherly love, we shall secure to ourselves in this world the peace and happiness which will flow from such intercourse : and when time and the world shall have run to the end of their course, we shall be gathered together into the heavenly pastures of our Chief Shepherd, where sin, and trouble, and sorrow shall disturb our hearts no more.

SERMON IV.

TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

John ch. 13. v. 34.

*“A new commandment I give unto you,
That ye love one another.”*

IN the discourse which I addressed to you last Lord's day from this text, I considered our obligation to obey the precept, as it regards our feelings and dispositions towards the whole world, to every individual of the human race; esteeming them all as brethren, children of the same heavenly Father, and invited to partake of the same promises which we hope to be realized in ourselves. I also shewed, that the commandment is binding upon us as the people of one nation, dwelling in the same land, governed

and protected by the same laws, and influenced and more or less acted upon by the same political, religious, and moral feelings and pursuits. I also briefly, in reference to the precept, touched upon the attachment which ought to subsist, and be cherished in our hearts towards each other, with regard to our closer and more intimate connexion, as a christian minister, and a christian congregation.

It is impossible however to include in a single sermon any thing like a comprehensive consideration of many of those points of duty, which this divine commandment embraces, and obliges us to observe. It may indeed be said to take within its compass, every heavenly and every earthly obligation which man can owe to man. And I therefore trust that a further enlargement upon this text may not be unprofitable to us.

And here, my christian brethren, before we proceed further, let us consider how the preaching of the gospel may be abundantly

blessed to our spiritual welfare.—Even by humble and earnest application to the throne of grace, that the ministration of God's word may not be ineffectual: that as the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the preaching of his apostle, so he would enable us to receive, not into our outward ears only, but into our hearts and affections, the instructions which are conveyed to us by an explanation of his holy word. It is indeed in vain to expect that we shall be benefited, unless we always have a special regard and sincere desire for that help which cometh from above; for “except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it,”—except the Lord be present with us by his Spirit, to open our understandings and our hearts, the preaching of his gospel may pass through our ears like the sound of a tinkling cymbal, and leave no impression behind it. Let us ever then brethren, this day and at all times, in humble dependence upon that Almighty and gracious Spirit,—

that corrector of our wanderings,—that restrainer of our perverse wills,—that guide and director of our best ways,—that comforter of our minds, and encourager of all our holy and good desires ;—let us, in entire reliance upon his help, meekly and patiently expect the blessings which may be derived to us, by the lessons of wisdom, of holiness, and of piety, which the elucidation of the gospel of the Redeemer will bring before our minds.

To proceed then with my subject. The wants and pursuits of mankind are of such a nature as to bring us into frequent contact with each other ; and we are so dependent for our comfort, and convenience, and happiness, upon others as well as upon ourselves, that we must of necessity maintain a constant intercourse and communication with those amongst whom we live. How necessary is it then, that this intercourse should be maintained in a proper manner, and with a right spirit ; and that in all our transactions and dealings,

whether with the world at large, or with our own little neighbourhood immediately around us, we should ever be guided and moved by those principles of moral and religious duty, which will bring the greatest measure of satisfaction and peace to us all.

Here then, brethren, in our text, we have a perfect, an infallible rule for our direction. If we endeavour to cast away from ourselves the narrow-mindedness and selfishness which is apt to be the predominant feeling of the men whose faith and hopes rest only on the objects of this world ; and if we give up our hearts to the influence of that heavenly precept of our Lord which is the subject of our present consideration, we shall not only prove, but we shall experience also, what is that good, and comfortable, and blessed result, of walking in the faith of his holy gospel, and of loving one another as he has given us a commandment.

It appears to be an appointed ordinance of Almighty Providence, that every man

and woman born into the world shall experience a certain portion of happiness, and misery; of prosperity, and adversity; of joy and delight, and of sorrow and tribulation. How gratifying is it to the heart, under any of these states, when we meet with those who in a spirit of kind and compassionate sympathy, will “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” This quotation from the apostle induces me to observe, how beautifully the different parts of scripture harmonize with each other, and how frequently and earnestly we are exhorted, as disciples of our common Saviour, to be all united and bound and knit together in sentiments of brotherly and christian affection.

But I proceed to shew, more distinctly, how we may exercise this sentiment of love to our brethren, both as to their temporal and spiritual concerns.

The wants and deficiencies of mankind are so numerous, and especially among the poor, that we can scarcely pass a single day

without being called on for the exercise of this grace. We are bound to assist our fellow-creatures, as far as our circumstances permit, and their need demands : and holy scripture will generally point out, both the measure and the manner in which that assistance may be afforded. “Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.” “Let him that hath two coats give to him that hath none, and let him that hath meat do likewise.” “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” “If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink.” “Thus shall ye be the children of your Father which is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain upon the just and on the unjust.”

It may be said, indeed, that our own particular necessities are such as to require all our care and attention in providing a supply for them. Doubtless our first concern is

with our homes ; and we are bound, both by scripture and reason, to provide for our own households : but there are few persons so circumscribed, as not to be able sometimes to spare a little of their substance to the more pressing wants of some of their fellow-creatures: and surely they may afford their two pence with the good Samaritan, or their two mites with the poor widow in the gospel ; and the distressed and needy and sick neighbour will not fail to receive some help from him, who feels that he is himself indebted to the Giver of all good, for every comfort and benefit which he undeservedly enjoys.

The precept in the text, however, by no means limits us to helping one another with our substance : it embraces a far larger field of christian usefulness, and includes many points of duty, which, when faithfully performed, are productive of more happiness and advantage than the mere giving our money or goods to feed the poor.

“Love one another.” How widely is

this commandment departed from in the conduct of our every day existence ! Oh, how apt are we, brethren, to love, to idolize, to think highly of ourselves ; how careful to attend to our own interest ; how anxious to pursue our own advantage, regardless of the concerns of other men ! If we consider the very poor, or those who are beneath us in the walk of life, we are apt to express towards them a sort of high-minded compassion, and in the pride of our hearts, to thank God, or perhaps to thank ourselves, that we are better than they. And if we consider those who are more elevated, who seem to be more favoured, and to possess greater advantages than ourselves, how prone is a spirit of envy and jealousy to creep in and darken our minds, and to banish those feelings of deference and respectful esteem which they ought to receive at our hands. And again, if our enemy come in our way, for we shall always have some enemy ; that is, we shall always have some one to oppose us or cross us in some

of our pursuits whether temporal or spiritual; and if such happen to come in our way, how do the feelings of irritation, of anger, and resentment arise in our breasts! It is astonishing how ready people are to submit themselves to the influence of evil tempers and dispositions, and to cherish a spirit of unkindness, and envy, and reproachful speaking and railing. And it is astonishing too what mischief, and even actual suffering and misery it often occasions in society. But we, my christian brethren, who are professors of the gospel of Jesus, if we would attend to it, are there taught far different and better things. How beautiful were the feet of Him who gave to us this heavenly commandment, "that ye love one another:" and how beautiful would be the picture which that society would present, where the command were obeyed in all its faithfulness. And why should not that picture be presented here? Why should the dominion of Satan be so much submitted to, and the inhabitants of our

neighbourhood be shut out and severed from the hearts of each other, by the evil surmisings, and unfriendly animosities which that wicked one delights to plant and to propagate among weak and erring creatures? Why should we not rather take the advice of the apostle Paul to the Ephesians, and “let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from us, with all malice, and be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven us?”

If we would be thought to be true to the principles which we profess; if we would desire to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called; and if we would not be content to have merely named upon us the name, and to possess only the shadow or resemblance of christians, then must we be careful to shew, that the inclinations and dispositions of the natural man are brought into subjection; at least that we daily strive and endeavour, by the

assistance of God's grace, that they shall be so. The spirit which reigns in the worldly and unrenewed man, is little akin to that spirit, which pervades every page of gospel instruction, and which is felt and acted on by every sincere and humble disciple of Jesus. If the spirit of humility be of the very essence of the gospel, the exhibition of that spirit in acts of kind and brotherly affection, is the true badge, the sure characteristic of a good christian, which cannot be mistaken. "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Brethren, I feel that you must all be convinced of the excellence of this grace ; and that as christians it is incumbent upon you always to exercise it. Be instructed then in your duty in this respect, and be careful to practise it. Bring your minds and your hearts to a conformity to the character of that Saviour who was the friend, the kind

and compassionate friend of all men. "Let each esteem others better than himself." "Let every man look, not only on his own things, but also on the things of others." It is difficult to divest our minds of selfish and interested feelings, in our own strength it would be useless to attempt it; yet if every individual were to do his part towards fulfilling the command of our Lord in the text, we should all more than find our account, in the increased comfort, and happiness, and enjoyment which it would bring to our bosoms and to our dwellings. The exercise of a malicious, and uncharitable, and unforgiving temper never brought peace to the heart of any man; it can only afford a false gratification to those in whose hearts true religion has no place; whose ways are not ways of pleasantness, and whose paths are not the paths of peace.

It will sometimes happen, in our intercourse with others, that we shall be sore tempted to lay aside the spirit which is here recommended to us. We shall meet with

those who will revile and speak evil of us ; but if so, we must not revile again ; we must not return evil for evil. We shall have to do with others who will oppose themselves almost for the sake of opposition ; who in a spirit of ambition and pride, and an overweening conceit of their own judgment and consequence, will do nothing but what they can do in their own way, and will join in no beneficial and useful project, unless they are to be the chief directors of it. In this case however, and in all others, we must be careful to preserve a spirit of meekness and conciliation ; remembering whose command it is that we are bound to observe ; and whose bright example, in his own practical illustration of it we are called upon to follow ; endeavouring always to forgive and to forbear one another in love ; to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace ; and to live in friendship, harmony, and concord, with those with whom we have to do.

The foregoing observations upon our

Lord's commandment to love one another, although arising from the principles of the gospel, have chiefly respected our circumstances in a worldly or temporal point of view. Poor, however, and very insufficient would be our observance of this command, if, in the feeling which we are called upon to exercise towards others, we had not also respect to their spiritual, and far more valuable interests. We are bound to do all the good we can to their bodies ; but, as far as our influence will extend, we cannot neglect the interest of their souls and be blameless. And here I would observe, that our chief concern is to begin at home. As the soul of each individual is of far more worth to him than the souls of all the world besides, our first object must be to work out *our own* salvation with fear and trembling, and to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. And we will at the same time remember the good resolution of Joshua ; " As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." We will

shew our regard to our households by setting before their minds the best object of their affections : by instructing them in the duties, and shewing them the privileges of their high and holy calling.

Brethren, it is a sight pleasing and acceptable to God, to behold a family, however small, joined together in a sacred bond of christian harmony ; offering at the footstool of divine mercy their prayers and praises to their common Father ; kindly bearing one another's burdens, and helping each other on in the way that leadeth unto life. O that such a sight were more general even in this place where we dwell. O that men would cease, at least for a few moments in the day, from their painful and anxious care about the things of this world ; and bend their minds, and their hearts, and their knees also, to a faithful and devout and humble exercise which has respect to the world to come. If you have regard for the truest happiness of those with whom you are connected by the ties of kindred,

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and domestic union, you must be anxious that their minds should be influenced by a proper sense of religious duty, and that the principles of Christianity should be the guide of all their ways. This is the source from which true happiness alone can spring. Let your love towards them be manifested, therefore, in the endeavour to bring them as well as yourselves to the feet of the Saviour: teach them, and help them to bear the cross and to follow Christ. Let the unbelieving and worldly-minded husband be sanctified and brought to the truth by the earnest and faithful solicitations of the believing wife; and let the ignorant and careless and unbelieving wife be drawn and encouraged in the way of godliness by the pious and believing husband. Let the christian parent instruct his child to flee to the Friend of sinners, to lay hold of the covenant of grace, and to bring forth the precious fruits of a godly and a christian life. And let the early and youthful christian though seemingly contrary to the order

of nature, yet not contrary to the precepts of the gospel ;—let him who has been mercifully brought to remember his creator in the bloom and opening of his years, strive to influence his erring and ungodly parents, and entice them into the fold of his own heavenly Shepherd.

But my beloved hearers, your help, your labour of christian love must be extended beyond your own families. If you are the disciples of Christ yourselves, you will be desirous that all should be his disciples : strive to do your part, then, to make them become such. Wherever you witness the practice of evil,—and you will have too many opportunities of doing so,—endeavour to banish and correct it, and to stir up and propagate good in its stead.

I know, indeed, that it is more especially the province of the minister of Christ to attend to these things ; and with the blessing and assistance of Almighty God, it shall be my humble endeavour, and my greatest happiness, both to preach the

gospel, on the Sabbath day, in his sacred temple, and also to bear its glad tidings in a more familiar and personal manner to the homes and the hearts of my flock. But the effects of my ministerial labours may be greatly increased by your own cooperation and assistance. Our blessed Lord, from the beginning to the end of his ministry, went about doing good ; and we are commanded, one and all of us, in our several places and stations, to go and do likewise. If we love one another with the love of Christianity, we shall shew its genuineness in active endeavours to do good : and we are well persuaded that no good can be so valuable as the furtherance of the gospel, and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom in the hearts of men. But if we neglect these duties ; if we pay no attention to the wants and necessities of others ; if, when we see wickedness we lift not up our voice against it ; if, instead of influencing our neighbours to the practice of righteousness, we calmly acquiesce in their perverseness and folly ;

if, when we might be the means of saving a fellow-creature, as it were a brand plucked from the burning, we yet suffer him to go on in his heedless course, without rebuke or friendly warning ; if, instead of obeying the commandment to love one another, we perform no one of the duties which it unquestionably includes ; terrible will be the sentence, and fearful will be the destiny which will await us, when an account of our conduct shall be demanded of us by our Eternal Judge.

But my brethren I sincerely hope better things both of you and myself. We have much work, many duties on our hands, but not more than we are able to perform. But as I said at the first, and as I shall tell you perhaps yet a thousand times again, our ability is not of ourselves. No, it is from that help alone which cometh from above. Barren and unholy would be our thoughts, and powerless our endeavours, if we had not the unction and guidance and strength of that Divine Spirit, which the

Lord has promised to them that truly seek it.

Bearing in mind, then, our mutual ignorance, and helplessness, and sinfulness; and bearing in mind also that we have a powerful and gracious succour always at hand to help us, stronger than all the strength and corruptions of sin; let it be our care and our praise, in this our day, and in this our neighbourhood, to exhibit the goodly spectacle of brethren dwelling together in christian unity and godly love: walking together as friends in God's house on his own blessed Sabbath; and never forgetting, in the other days of the week, the *purposes* and the *end* of our high and holy calling.

SERMON V.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT.

Matth. ch. 22. v. 35, 36, 37.

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

THE portion of scripture which has been read for the gospel of this day, and of which the words you have just heard form a part, shews, as other parts of the sacred volume likewise shew, in what manner, and with what kind of spirit many of the Jews came to the Saviour,—not to hear his doctrines, that they might be benefited and improved by them, but that they might

“catch him in his words, and entangle him in his talk.” And the same holy scripture shews also, in what spirit the compassionate Jesus met their cavils, and responded to their captious questions. For though he sometimes put to silence their forward presumption, and confounded them in their own wisdom, yet he always endeavoured to instruct their understandings, to bring their minds to the acknowledgment of the truth, and to excite in them a more spiritual feeling, not only with regard to the religion which he was himself teaching, but with respect to that also which they had so long professed in all its outward pomp and ceremony. Unhappily, the preaching of Jesus was too frequently lost upon them, producing no conviction or improvement, on account of their unbelief and hardness of heart.

My brethren, let us consider whether a similar spirit does not often exhibit itself in the present day. Let us enquire whether the preaching of the word is always

attended, not only as a means of spreading abroad the knowledge of the gospel, but also of dispensing its privileges, and blessings, and consolations. Are there none who come to hear the word as the Jews did, in a spirit of vain and captious curiosity, with no other intention than to hear what fresh subject, what new doctrine the preacher has to discourse of; to discuss the merits of his sermon, and to animadvert upon what they hear, rather than apply it to their own hearts and consciences? Do I at this moment, brethren, speak to any among you who ever come to God's house with such a disposition, and for such a purpose as this? Where then is even a particle of the love of God: that love, of all your heart, and soul, and mind, which is commanded you in the bible?—that love, which, wherever it exists, is always accompanied with deep reverence for all the ordinances of the Lord, and for all the appointments of his religion! O, how much wiser, how much better would it be, on the arrival of the Sabbath morn, to say

within yourselves, Let us go to church to hear the word of God, and learn his will: we will enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: it is the place where his honour dwelleth: it is the place where he has recorded his blessed and glorious name: it is the place where he has promised to meet his people, to hear and accept their prayers, and to send them an answer of peace: surely "it is no other than the house of God; it is the gate of heaven." How much better, I repeat, would it be, for you always to entertain such a disposition, and to feel such sentiments as these! Endeavour then, beloved, to realize to yourselves such a spirit at this time. Then will the preaching of the word be profitable to you, and will come home with power to your hearts: the lessons of religion which you hear from this place will be carried to your souls, and sanctified to their improvement, by the secret influences of that good Spirit, who is ever ready to minister grace to the faithful

hearers, and to open their hearts to the reception of heavenly truth.

The commandment in our text was not new when it was given by the Lord to the lawyer, who asked the captious question; neither was it new when delivered by Moses to the Israelites in the wilderness: it is as ancient as the Creation, and will be in force to the end of time. And not only so, but the faithful and devout love of God is the principle which will reign in the hearts of the righteous, when they shall have passed beyond the dark valley and shadow of death, and shall be settled in the mansions of eternal blessedness. And this is the principle, brethren, which now and at all times ought to influence the hearts of those who profess to be followers and servants of the Redeemer. To love the Lord our God with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the mind, is better than whole burnt offerings;—better than all the oblations and sacrifices which man can present or devise.

In many other parts of scripture besides the text, this is the way in which God commands us to devote our hearts to his service; and it becomes a matter of great importance to us, to examine and inquire into the principles and motives of our conduct, that we may ascertain whether our love to God is in accordance with the injunction of his holy word; or whether it does not too often fall greatly and grievously short of it.

We know, indeed, that whilst we are clothed with the corruptible body of the flesh, we can perform no service to God, but which must be mingled with much imperfection. Our best and most pious offices must partake, in some degree, of the alloy and infirmity which human nature will always be heir to in this world. But my brethren it is the inward disposition and intention;—it is the *affection* and *purpose of the heart* which are here to be considered; and these always may and ought to be, pure and holy. We know that it is

impossible to yield a *perfect* obedience to the law of God. No one can bring his conduct and conversation up to that standard of sinless purity, which is contained in the doctrines and precepts of holy scripture. If it *could* be so, man would not need a Redeemer to atone for his manifold sins and imperfections. But, my brethren, God looks to the desires of the heart;—and we all may *wish* and *desire* to serve him as he has commanded us: and we all may ask, and obtain the assistance of his blessed Spirit to forward our desires; and then, if we read, and study, and attend to the preaching of God's word, and strive to live up to it to the best of our understanding and ability, we do all that is required of us. Our performances may, and will be far short of perfection; but through the mediation and atonement of Jesus Christ, God will graciously accept them, and will bestow upon us the full measure of their reward.

Thus, you will easily perceive what is

meant by loving God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind; and you will also be able to feel whether the affections and desires of *your* hearts correspond with the explanation which has been given. But as the subject of our text naturally branches out into several particulars, I will endeavour to point them out for your consideration and advantage.

We are required to love God with the highest degree of love that we can possibly raise our souls up to, infinitely before and above every thing else; and the principal reason of this is, because he is better than all other things. What indeed is there in the whole created world that is at all to be compared to him; or what shall we find besides himself, that so well deserves our best affections? If we would seek a good that extends to all times and to all places; a good that is every where present, and may every where be felt, we must seek it in God. His goodness is

infinite; his mercy endureth from one generation to another; and his bounty and lovingkindness are extended to the uttermost parts of the creation.

In like manner, if we would seek a good that is satisfactory and unchangeable, where shall we find it but in that high and holy Being, at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore; and who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? We may toil and fret ourselves after the cares and concerns of this life; we may spend our whole existence in the pursuit of something which we may fancy will at last yield us the happiness we are in search of; but if we seek it not in God, we shall find it not in the world. Is it in the possession of wealth that we look for happiness? Is it in being exalted to honour? Is it that we may enjoy all the pleasures that this world can bestow? Behold, these things all pass away, and become as though they had never been. Men labour, and weary themselves in the pursuit of riches; and instead of

producing them happiness, they often become a temptation and a snare to them. "He that loveth silver," saith Solomon, "shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance, with increase." And what is honour? often it is an empty title, and a vain phantom of the imagination. And what if we could enjoy every sensual gratification and pleasure that the earth can yield? Would these things give real, and permanent, and perfect satisfaction to our hearts? No, my brethren, these are not the things which will satisfy us: they may give us a temporary, a fleeting pleasure; they may afford us a short and passing enjoyment as we travel through the pilgrimage of life; but it is God alone that can fill the desires of an immortal soul, and that can satisfy them for ever. He is the great, the necessary good; and it is Him and his righteousness that we must seek, far above every earthly pursuit, if we would secure a treasure which cannot be taken away; a happiness

which should remain with us throughout eternal ages.

Besides that God is the only great, the only satisfactory, unchangeable and eternal good; it is also from him only that all other goodness proceeds: and this is another reason why we should love him above all things.

Whatever earthly or spiritual advantages we enjoy; whatever may be the comforts of our situation; whatever success may attend our undertakings, or fruits arise from our labours:—all, all are the gifts of a merciful and overflowing Providence, who is rich in care and benevolence to all his creatures, even to the unthankful and the disobedient; who causeth his sun to rise upon the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and on the unjust.

To this great and beneficent Being, then, it behoves us to devote our entire affections; and, as we are commanded in the text, “to love him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind.”

Yet, my brethren, how widely different from this are the feelings of most men! What numbers are there in the world, who call themselves the disciples of the Redeemer, whose love to God is almost as opposite to what we have been considering, as light is to darkness! And may there not be some, even in the little flock which is here assembled, whose hearts are in this state; some, whose love to God is such, that they care not to retain him in all their thoughts; some whose entire religion consists in presenting themselves once a week in the house of God, and performing a few outward acts of devotion? If there be such persons, it is the duty of the minister of the gospel to endeavour to apply himself faithfully to their hearts and consciences, that he may pull down the strong-holds of sin and Satan, which surround and prevent the exercise of their better feelings; and urge them to enter into the pursuit and practice of true godliness, whose ways

alone are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace.

Now, my hearers, let me entreat you to consider how far you are chargeable with transgressing the commandment in the text. Compare your temporal and earthly pursuits with those services which you owe to God; and be not blinded by vain delusions, but judge yourselves with candour and sincerity. How anxious are you every morning you arise, to prosecute your worldly business to the greatest possible advantage! How steadily and actively do you set yourselves every day to the pursuit of your several occupations and callings! How carefully do you examine your accounts to see if all is going on rightly! How desirous are you to increase your gains, and to obtain an abundance of the good things of this life! How solicitous are you in your endeavours to please those from whom you receive, or expect to receive benefits! How eager are you to follow any object, or to embrace any plan

which is likely to afford you sensual gratification or pleasure !

And whilst you are thus occupied with your temporal concerns, what are you doing for the honour of God, and the welfare of your souls? Are your religious duties performed with the same earnestness, the same indefatigable zeal, which you bestow upon the transient and perishable, and perhaps worthless things of time? Are your hearts and affections as intently fixed upon heavenly treasures, as they are upon your worldly interests? Is it your first care to apply yourselves to the Giver of all good, and to crave his blessing upon the daily labours and employments you are engaged in? Are your minds as much taken up with the thoughts of God, as they are with the world? Do you take the same care in examining your spiritual accounts, and the state of your souls, as you do in looking into your temporal affairs? Are you as solicitous to please your heavenly Father, and to be found faithful in his

sight, as you are to obtain the good opinion and favour of men? O that you would be convinced, my brethren, of this important truth,—that the pursuit and the practice of these things are of infinitely greater consequence to you than any thing in the world besides! How can your love to God be agreeable to the command in the text, so long as your hearts are fettered and entangled with earthly concerns? How can you consider yourselves the true disciples of the Saviour, when his religion is so seldom present to your thoughts, and has so little influence over your conduct? Be assured, that whilst your hearts are in this state, you are not entitled to be called his children, you have no right to inherit his promises, you have no solid hope of obtaining the kingdom of heaven. Do not deceive yourselves: do not be carried away with false ideas of your spiritual state: do not suppose, that because you have been born and educated in a christian land, and have often presented yourselves in the

assemblies of the Lord's house:—do not, I say, on this account alone, imagine that you are true christians. Christianity requires of its disciples much more than this: it requires them to turn their backs upon a corrupt and sinful world, and not to be conformed to its practices: it requires them to devote their hearts and affections to the service of God, and to love him above all things: it requires them to imitate the pattern of Christ, to follow the footsteps of his holy life, and to use their best endeavours, and most unwearied exertions to secure the eternal happiness of their immortal souls:—in one word, it requires them to love God “with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their mind.”

Let me then urge you, my hearers, to examine your hearts: do it with faithfulness and sincerity: probe and search them to the bottom; and you will then be able to know how far short your conduct is of the holy commandment of the Lord. And

as you discover, and are convinced of your sinfulness in this respect, be not slow to repent of it; and to shew the sincerity of your repentance, by living as becomes those who have been redeemed of the Lord. Consider, that unless you love God above all things, and strive to obtain *his* approbation above that of men, you are not worthy of your christian name. “He that loveth the world,” saith the scripture, “the love of the Father is not in him.” “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” You cannot be the servants and followers of a guilty world, and at the same time be the servants of a pure and holy God: you must set your *whole* affections on things above, for God will not accept of a divided heart. If ever you would inhabit those blessed abodes which are prepared for the souls of the righteous, you must make them the centre of all your hopes and all your desires: you must consider them as the mark, to which you are to press ardently forward, to obtain the prize of your high calling in Christ

Jesus : you must set your faces steadily towards heaven, and suffer not yourselves again to be drawn backward into the snares and entanglements of a vain and deceitful world. O that I could persuade you, my brethren, of the necessity of attending to these things, and of the great danger of neglecting them ! O that you would not shut your eyes to the perception of your best interests ; but that you would be prevailed on to see and to follow the things which belong to your peace, before they are for ever hidden from your sight. This world is not to be your everlasting home ; why then should you be so attached to it ? Its possessions are not to be your eternal portion ; why then should you be so anxious to enjoy them ? Rather seek first, and above all, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. If you are possessed of the gifts of fortune, you will enjoy them with tenfold pleasure and delight, if your heart be devoted to God. If Providence

has placed you in a station where you have to labour for your daily food, your religion will teach you to bear your lot with contentment, and not to murmur at the dispensations of heavenly wisdom. All these distinctions will soon pass away, and will be buried in the grave along with those who bear them. In the world to come, we shall be judged, not according to the rank or station we hold in this life; but according to the manner in which we devote our hearts to God, and are obedient to the commands of his holy gospel. If we give ourselves up to the cares of the world, and waste our time and our talents in the pursuit of its vain and unprofitable concerns: we shall have nothing to reap for our toil, but misery, bitterness, and woe: the sentence of everlasting condemnation is only what we can expect to receive, and the wrath and indignation of God will abide on us for ever.

But on the other hand, if we devote ourselves to the service of the Lord: if we

love him with all our heart, and endeavour to be found walking in his ways : if we consider the future state of our souls as the one thing needful, to which it behoves us to give our best care and attention : and if we earnestly strive to become the faithful people of the Lord, and to have our names written in the Lamb's book of life ; then indeed shall we experience what it is to be truly happy. We shall find that our labour will not be in vain : and when this world and all its possessions shall have for ever passed away, we shall be received into those happy, blissful habitations, where eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him and keep his commandments.

SERMON VI.



ON CHRISTIAN PRAYER.

John ch. 16. v. 23.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

THE introduction of Christianity into the world by the coming of the Messiah, brought with it an extensive change of principles, of sentiments, and opinions, both as it regarded the nature, and the moral condition of man, his present character, and eternal destination; and also as it regarded the religious worship which man should perform to Almighty God; and the different and peculiar relation

which would thenceforward subsist between them.

The pride of the Jew, who piqued himself upon the punctilious observance of the outward ceremonies and traditions of his religion, and whose chief merit too often consisted in nothing but an attention to these things, whilst he neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith: this pride and self-importance were now to be overthrown, and to give way to that humbler and more spiritual state of heart, which the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus was intended to produce in all his followers.

The idolatrous worship, and the corrupt and impure practices of the gentile nations were now to be abolished, and to be exchanged for that pure and holy dispensation, which was revealed to mankind in the gospel.

The religion of the Jew was burdened with oppressive and wearisome ceremonies, with many sacrifices and fastings, and

outward washings and purifications; and in his addresses to the Divine Being, he was generally too much taken up with these outward things, to admit of his offering a pure and spiritual worship. He would consequently be disposed to rest his hopes upon them, and when he offered his prayers to the Lord of Hosts, he would be apt to imagine that they derived their chief efficacy from the exact and punctual manner in which he attended to these external ordinances. In seeking for the substance he grasped at the shadow, and his religion became therefore vain and ineffectual.

The heathen or gentile nations, on the other hand, had corrupted the true religion infinitely more than the Jews, and had almost entirely lost both the worship and the knowledge of the Creator.

The introduction of Christianity, and the preaching and establishment of the gospel, not only brought life and immortality to light by the glorious and divine truths which it revealed to men; but it also

shewed both to the Jew and the Gentile the false foundation on which their religion was built. The one trusted to his legal rites and ceremonies, the other to his vain and idolatrous superstitions. These old things were now to pass away; all things were to become new. The bringing in of a better covenant opened to mankind the knowledge of a better foundation, on which their faith and hopes might be more firmly and more surely established. There was a name, a precious name now revealed to the world, which was to be the rock on which men should lay the foundation of all their happiness. That name was to be the medium of communication between man and his Creator: it was to be, as it were, the ladder, on which the prayers and breathings of the devout and humble soul should ascend before the presence of the Eternal Majesty on high. And that name was the name of the Lord Jesus Christ: by that, and by no other should men be saved. It pleased the Father to send his only-begotten

Son into the world, to suffer and to die for its sins, and by the shedding of his blood to purchase the redemption of the human race. And having accomplished the purpose for which he was sent, he returned to the bosom of his Father, there to be a Mediator and an Intercessor for man, that man might be again reconciled and restored to the favour of God, and become entitled, through the atonement of his Redeemer, to the blessings and privileges of the gospel. Christ being the Mediator between God and man, it is the duty of man to seek these blessings in his name, in order that he may receive them; for Christ says, in the words of our text, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

In further discoursing from these words, it is my intention, under the divine blessing and assistance, to treat of the important duty of christian prayer.

This is a subject of great consequence: it is the chief business of religion: it is the

most necessary, as well as the most profitable employment in which man can be engaged. It is a subject, moreover, which the minister of the gospel generally sets before his congregation more frequently than any other subject: it often makes a part, sometimes a considerable part of his sermons: and yet, notwithstanding all this, christian prayer is that duty, which, we fear, is more neglected than any other duty. It is therefore necessary that the consideration of this duty should be over and over again pressed upon your minds, and that you should be urged to enter upon, and to abide in the practice of it: for it is the very life of the Christian: without it, no man can ever experience real or permanent happiness in this world: without it, no man will ever enter into the blessed abodes of heaven in the world to come. It is the very food on which the soul subsists; without which it is spiritually dead, and must remain in darkness for ever. We might as well expect the body to live

without nourishment, as that the spiritual life of the soul could be sustained without prayer; for the one is as necessary as the other.

Let us then consider some of the reasons which should induce us to be found in the regular and constant exercise of this important duty of our religion.

When we reflect upon the natural state of man, the various stages and circumstances of his life, the many changes and vicissitudes he must undergo from the time he is born into the world, until he comes to be covered with the dust of death: when we consider his numberless wants and necessities; and the utter impossibility of supplying them of himself; we have one of the strongest arguments that can be offered, for an earnest looking up, and a constant application to the Supreme and Eternal Governor of the universe, in order that these wants and necessities may be supplied;—that these changes and vicissitudes may be met with fortitude and proper

dispositions ;—and that the anxieties, and troubles, and sorrows, which accompany man during his earthly pilgrimage, may be mercifully softened, and tempered to his condition and circumstances.

But if we have so much reason to offer our prayers to God for his guidance and help in our temporal affairs, the argument becomes infinitely stronger which should bind us to pray for his instruction and assistance in our spiritual concerns. If it behove us to entreat him for the supply of our bodily wants and necessities ; much more is it our indispensable duty to supplicate him for the supply of those spiritual wants of our souls, which are far more necessary, and of far higher importance. The difference indeed is so great, between the value of the soul, and the worth of the body, that all comparison is lost between them. And hence arises the necessity of more than tenfold diligence, in earnestly applying for the succours of divine grace, and in seeking first,

and most, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

The temporal wants of the body may perhaps be supplied, even *without* praying for them; and the passage through this world may perhaps present few anxieties or sorrows, even to some persons whose lips never breathe a supplication to God, and whose knees never bend before his footstool: for we know that the Lord "causeth his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." But without prayer, the wants and necessities of the soul will never be supplied; for they proceed directly from our heavenly Father; and he will give them to none but those who ask for them. And O, what a miserable condition must that soul be in, which never holds communion with its Creator; which never receives the blessed influences of his Spirit in this life; and which consequently can have no hope of salvation in the next! My brethren, it is of great importance that

you should reflect deeply on this truth:—the blessings of the gospel covenant are received by those who faithfully and devoutly ask for them: the Lord is found of those who earnestly and diligently seek him: and the door of mercy is opened to those, who in meekness and sincerity of heart obey the precept of their Saviour, and humbly knock for admittance.

Let us then remember that it is God alone who is able to supply all our wants, and that they can be obtained from no other source but his bounty and goodness, “for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof.” And besides his being able to supply our necessities, we know also that he has promised to supply them; but it is only upon this condition,—that we pray for them. St. John says, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

And our Lord also says, in the verse following our text, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

Let us now endeavour to take a review of our necessities. From the time of infancy to the period of old age, how various and complicated are our wants, and how numerous also are the blessings we receive. Who guardeth with tender care our infant days, and bringeth us up to manhood? Who bestows upon us health and strength, and enables us to go forth to our daily labour? Who sustaineth us in our riper years, and carrieth us even to hoary hairs? From whence arises the supply of every thing we need?—the daily bread which we eat, the garments with which we are clothed, and the thousand other necessities which we have occasion for? Where do these all come from? The husbandman may sow his seed, but who sendeth his rain upon it and causeth it to bring forth its fruits of increase? The working man may

go forth to his toil, but who provides for him the reward of his labour? The weary may lie down to rest, but who watches over him when he is asleep, and causes him to see the light of another day? Can we, brethren, or dare we say, that all these, or *any* of these things could be produced by ourselves? Truly, naked and destitute we came into the world, and naked and destitute we should remain whilst we are in it, if we had nothing but what we could procure by our own power. How greatly then does it become our duty, that we should constantly offer up our prayers to that Almighty and merciful God, from whom all these gifts proceed! And how much is it our interest also, earnestly to make our application to that heavenly source, from whence we know that all our wants can be supplied! We do not sufficiently feel, that every thing we enjoy has been sent to us by the Lord, because the gifts of his Providence are so common, and so universal. The constant and regular supply of our

daily necessities are too seldom considered as blessings by us, because they are so manifold, and often obtained without asking for. Yet our prayers are not the less necessary on that account: for the blessings of Divine Providence may be withdrawn,—and we know that they have been withdrawn from the earth, on account of the wickedness and unthankfulness of men. And although the blessings may be sent to those who never ask for them, and who do not perceive the hand of the gracious giver; yet we know that the promise is sure to none but those who beseech them of God by humble prayer.

Let us now take a review of the wants of the soul. If the body be destitute when it is brought into the world; much more truly may it be said of the soul, that it is poor, and blind, and naked: and as I said before, it is impossible that its wants can ever be supplied, without fervent and faithful prayer. For, consider what is its natural state. It is entirely lost in ignorance: it

is at enmity with God : a cloud of darkness veils the understanding : it can obtain the possession of no true knowledge : no solid peace, no happiness, no comfort can dwell within it : the present gives it no satisfaction : the future presents nothing but gloom, and doubt, and distraction : it is cast down for very heaviness ; and like Noah's dove can find no rest for the sole of its foot. How then can this sad state be remedied ? How shall its ignorance be cleared away, and the illuminating power of truth be caused to shine in upon it ? We do not deny, indeed, that the soul may obtain knowledge, without prayer ;—much and various knowledge as it respects this world :—but not the knowledge that maketh wise unto salvation. Where then shall this be supplied ? How shall it become acquainted with the things which concern its everlasting destiny ? How shall it acquire that peace of mind which passeth understanding ?—that peace which will enable it to pass through the trials and difficulties of

this life with calmness and contentment ; and to look forward to the prospect of a future state with a glorious and well-founded hope of eternal blessedness ? How shall the soul obtain an experimental acquaintance with the truths of the gospel ? How shall it acquire an interest in the blood of the Son of God, and be enabled to apply to itself the benefits of the atonement which he made for the sins of the world ? How shall these, and all the other various wants and necessities of the soul be supplied to it ? Need I answer the question ? Need I say that they will be given to those who sincerely ask for them ? Yes, brethren, prayer is the means which will obtain for the soul the supply of every necessity, and the fulfilment of every promise. Prayer is that powerful weapon of the christian warfare which pierces the skies, and opens a way to the eternal throne of the Most High. It is prayer which brings down upon our souls the blessed visitations of the Holy Spirit of God, who never turns

a deaf ear to the petitions that are faithfully offered to him. It is this that enlightens our minds, that we may be able to understand the Scriptures, and to know the way of salvation. It is this that enables us to hold communion with our heavenly Father, and that causes him to look upon us as the children of his love. It is this which softens and smooths the rugged path of life, and enables us to hold fast the anchor of our hope, amidst all the storms and temptations of this wicked and troublesome world. Finally, it is the exercise of faithful, fervent, and holy prayer, which will enable us to overcome the power of every adversary; which will cause us to triumph over death and the grave, and will at last open to us the gates of eternal glory.

Such, my hearers, is the efficacy of christian prayer; and such is the necessity of practising it. You see how destitute and miserable the soul must ever remain without it; and you see what true consolation

and happiness are produced by the exercise of it.

Let me then urge you to weigh well what has now been said, and to reflect that you have a deep and important interest in it. Examine the reality of your state; and consider the many wants and necessities both of your souls and bodies. Remember that every thing you need is ready to be given to you out of the fulness of a merciful and compassionate Father, who waiteth to receive your prayer, and openeth his ear unto your cry. And O, let this remembrance stir you up to a constant and daily practice of this most necessary, and most blessed employment. "Pray without ceasing." "In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

In the exercise of this duty, however, there is one point which you must never forget. The prayers which you offer up to God, must always be offered in the name of

Jesus Christ. His own words in the text we are considering instruct us in this particular. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.”

I have not time to enter into this part of our subject at present: but with God’s blessing shall bring it before you again next Lord’s Day.

Only let me remind you, that in all your devotions, in all your addresses to your heavenly Father, you must constantly refer yourselves to that Saviour of the world, whose intercession alone can cause your services to be accepted. He is the appointed Mediator between God and man; there is no other name under heaven given unto us whereby we can be saved; neither is there any other means by which our supplications can be admitted before God, but only through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He is the blessed Advocate of humble and

penitent sinners, who receiveth their faithful prayers, and saveth all those that come unto God by him.

On him therefore, brethren, let your souls be stayed: let your trust be in his merits: let your every hope of pardon and salvation be established on the efficacy of his precious blood: let that blood be effectual for the propitiation of all your sins: let it be the means of washing and purifying your souls from every stain, that your Lord may at last be able to present them before his heavenly Father without blemish and without spot, to be partakers of his exceeding and everlasting joy.

SERMON VII.

ON CHRISTIAN PRAYER.

John ch. 16. v. 23.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

IN my discourse to you from this text last Sunday, I endeavoured to set before you the importance of christian prayer; and to shew you that it is your indispensable duty, in every vicissitude of your lives, and under every circumstance in which you may be placed, to address yourselves to that Almighty and beneficent Being, who is the giver of every good and perfect gift to man. The daily wants which you experience, and

the daily blessings you receive, should be constantly made the subject of earnest supplication and thanksgiving. For although the gifts of God are without repentance, and without respect of persons, and are often showered down upon the godly and the ungodly alike; yet the promise is sure to none but those, who in humble dependence upon Divine Providence, seek for the supply of their necessities. And it is these alone who know, that if they ask, they shall receive; and that every thing which is required for their bodily subsistence and comfort, shall be mercifully supplied out of their heavenly Father's fulness.

But the wants of the body are of trifling importance, when compared with the wants and necessities of the soul: and if it be incumbent upon us to pray for a supply of those things which we need for our *temporal* welfare; much more are we bound, by every motive both of duty and of interest, to seek for those *heavenly* and *spiritual* blessings which are necessary for our

eternal happiness. Barren, indeed, and unholy must our souls for ever remain, if they receive not the gifts and graces of that blessed Spirit, whose all-powerful influence is necessary, to take away the veil of darkness which covers our understandings ; to shew us the evil and misery of our ways ; and to lead us to a scriptural knowledge of the gospel, and to a practical obedience to its commandments.

But these spiritual gifts, however near at hand ; however ready to be distributed and shed abroad in our hearts, will not be granted to us except in answer to our faithful prayers. It is to those who deeply feel their helplessness, and see their need of such assistance, and who earnestly cry to him who alone is able to bestow it ;—it is to those that the illuminating and comforting influences of the Spirit will be sent ; to teach and instruct them in the ways and works of godliness ; and to support and cheer their spirits in all the temptations and crosses of their earthly passage. So highly important is the duty

of prayer; so rich and manifold are the blessings which it is the means of procuring us; and so utterly lost and miserable we must for ever remain without it; that it behoves us to give the subject our most serious and thoughtful consideration. If our souls are to dwell, either in eternal blessedness, or in eternal suffering, then surely we should diligently labour to feed them with that spiritual food, and to adorn them with those heavenly graces, which would fit them to be partakers of that glory which the Lord has appointed as the inheritance of his faithful people.

But having already, in my former discourse, impressed upon your minds the necessity of practising this duty, I come now to shew you in what manner your prayers must be offered, in order that they may be accepted and answered.

Our blessed Lord says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask and ye shall

receive, that your joy may be full." Here we have revealed to us the medium by which we may acceptably approach the Father. The precious name of Jesus Christ is that foundation, on which every hope of mercy and pardon must be built, and every expectation of happiness established. In his name the Christian's prayer must ever be made, for he is the appointed High Priest of our profession, by whose mediation alone we can hold communion with God. The devotions and supplications of even the purest heart must be clothed in the righteousness of the Son of God, before they can be presented at the throne of the Divine Majesty. Our cause must be pleaded by him who is our Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; otherwise there is no reconciliation for sinners; for he only is the propitiation for our transgressions: he only it is who is able to make compensation to the divine justice for the punishment due to guilty man, and to turn aside

the sword of vengeance, from which no human being has, of himself, power to escape. And the reason why we stand in need of such a Mediator is obvious, both from what we learn from Scripture, and from the consideration of what is continually passing in our own minds. From these sources we learn the melancholy, but necessary truth, that God and man are naturally at variance. Since the disobedience of our first parents, the glory and brightness of our nature have been fatally tarnished: the impress of the divine image has been almost wiped away from the soul; and its perfection and purity have been exchanged for a state of depravity and corruption. This is the great doctrine of the Bible; and to a serious and reflecting mind there needs not the force of argument to prove it to be true. From the moment in which the command of God was broken in Paradise, to the present time, the state of man by nature has been a state of rebellion against his Maker: all his ways

are evil, and all his thoughts are vain. Well might the apostle affirm, that “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” For what communion hath light with darkness; or what agreement can there be between a perfect and holy God, and a vile, polluted, sinful creature of the dust? Even if we have become the servants of God, and the disciples of his Son: if we have been convinced of our sinfulness, and brought to a saving knowledge of the gospel: if we have entered into the christian covenant, and have been renewed in the spirit of our minds; yet still, the indwelling of sin, and the remains of our former corruption have frequently such hold upon the heart, that we are obliged to maintain a constant struggle against the evil propensities of our nature; which, if left without the control of religious principles, and without the practice of religious duties, would never be kept in subjection, but would soon again draw us away into a state of alienation from God, and make our last end worse

than the beginning. I may appeal to your own hearts, my brethren, whether this be not the case. Every professing Christian who is endeavouring to please God and to walk in his commandments, feels, with St. Paul, that there is a law in his members constantly warring against the law of grace in his mind, and striving to bring him into captivity to the bondage of sin. In fact we perceive the strength and influence of the natural man in almost every thought, and every action of our lives. Whenever we would do good, evil is present with us : a worldly and sensual spirit is apt to pervade our most holy and sacred performances ; and even the devotions and supplications which we breathe at the footstool of the Almighty, are often mingled with earthly motives, and well nigh deprived of their efficacy and power, by the erring and wayward dispositions in which they are offered up. Hence we may perceive the necessity of a divine Mediator to stand between us and our offended Father,

in order that our petitions may be presented in his own name, and on account of his own righteousness; and that the things which we pray for may be obtained by his all-powerful intercession.

Let us not, however, deceive ourselves in this point. We may have a general acquaintance with the doctrines of Christianity: and without possessing, in our own character, one single mark of a true disciple of Jesus, we may yet know that he is the appointed High Priest of the gospel, and the great Mediator for sinners. But it is not enough for us to know that this is true: we must every one of us, individually and personally feel the necessity and importance of having him for a Mediator in our own case. We must have an humbling sense of the breach which sin has made betwixt us and our Creator: we must have a thorough consciousness of our own unworthiness in his sight; and a full and faithful conviction, that we are utterly unable of ourselves to advance one step

towards obtaining his reconciliation or favour. We must be well assured, that in our natural state, without the aid of divine grace, we cannot do anything to please God; and can deserve and obtain nothing but his anger and condemnation. Without these feelings and convictions, all our endeavours will be fruitless, all our professions will be vain, all our prayers will be without effect. It is only a sense of the *need* of mercy, that will cause us to seek it in the right way. It is only a consciousness of our lost and perishing condition in a state of nature, that will cause us to seek the assistance of divine grace, and enable us to build our faith upon a more secure foundation. It is only a conviction of our total inability to help ourselves, and a deep feeling of our *want* of a Mediator, that will cause us to seek one where he may be found; and that will enable us to lay all the burden of our sins and difficulties upon him who alone is able to bear them, and who is mighty to deliver us from them.

This, brethren, is the doctrine of the gospel; and it is that which we must not only know to be true, but which must be ever present to our minds, and pervade every feeling of our souls. It is when we entertain such dispositions and sentiments as these, that we see the great necessity of an atonement for sin, and understand the invaluable blessings of Redemption: and it is only by cherishing these dispositions in our hearts, that we shall be able to apply the efficacy of that atonement to ourselves, and become entitled to participate in those blessings.

From what has now been said, you may see the reason that our prayers should be made in the name of Jesus Christ. Sin separates us from God; but the compassionate Saviour comes and stands in the breach, and graciously intercedes in our behalf. Sin has laid us under the curse of the law, and made us subject to a sentence of eternal death; but the Redeemer has taken away the curse from us by the

sacrifice of himself, and has blotted out the hand-writing against us by the shedding of his own precious blood. Our sinfulness is no longer a barrier to the divine favour, if we have faith in Christ; for he has borne our sins in his own body on the tree, and made satisfaction for every demand of justice against us. Though shut out from every hope of mercy on our own account; yet if our trust be in him, we can come boldly to the throne of grace, and find mercy and grace to help us in the time of need. Though we know not what we should pray for as we ought; yet if our supplications proceed from devout and faithful lips, the Saviour bears them to the presence of his Father, covers their imperfections with his own purity and holiness, pleads for them his own merits, and so gains them acceptance.

This is the way, my christian friends, in which your prayers must be offered up; and this is the only way in which they will be heard and answered. Let it be strongly

impressed upon your minds, that without prayer, you can have no confident hope that you will be supplied with the necessities of this life; and be well assured that without prayer, you will never receive those gifts and graces which are wanted to prepare and enable you to receive the blessings of the next. And never forget the gracious means, appointed to render your services effectual. Remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is set at the right hand of God, to be your Intercessor and Advocate; and that it is only by his mediation that your persons and your prayers can be accepted. Let all your dependence therefore be in his merits: let your weakness find security in his strength: let the sinfulness and corruption of your nature be purified in that fountain which has been opened for sin and for uncleanness,—even in the precious and atoning blood of that Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

But some of you to whom I now speak may perhaps say, that your prayers are

frequently unanswered, and that you do not receive what you ask for. In reply to this, let me entreat you to consider this truth;—that from the beginning of the world to the present time, there never was a faithful prayer offered up, if offered in a right spirit, but it was graciously received by the Almighty, and answered to the benefit of the offerer. It may undoubtedly have happened that your prayers have not been answered, and that they sometimes have seemed to be offered in vain: but if the case be so, the cause rests with yourselves. Your prayers have been offered up without faithfulness; without an humble dependence upon the power and willingness of God to hear and to help you; and without a reliance on the name and merits of Christ to procure for you an answer of peace. Your case has been like that of the Jews whom the Lord rebuked by the mouth of his prophet: “This people honoureth me with their lips, and draweth nigh with their mouth, but their heart

is far from me." God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. His ear is always open to the cry of the humble and penitent suppliant; and no one that faithfully cometh to him in the name of Christ shall ever be rejected.

But another reason that your prayers are not answered, is, that you do not pray to a right end, or you ask for something that would do you hurt. St. James says, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." God sees what you have need of: he knows what is best, both for your temporal and spiritual happiness; and if he refuse to answer your faithful prayer in the way that you desire, it is your duty to believe that he denies you in mercy, and that what you ask for is not for your good.

There are various other reasons also, why you may not immediately receive what you pray for. God may refuse what you ask, but may give you something

better instead of it. Or he may intend to try what manner of spirit you are of;—whether you will believe and trust in him as well when he denies, as when he grants your requests. Whether you can say with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” Or with the prophet Habbakkuk, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

But finally, with respect to your prayers for mere *temporal* blessings, be not too anxious in desiring, nor too solicitous in asking for them. Do not make this or the other thing, which you suppose may be necessary for you, the particular subject of your prayer. Leave the distribution of worldly goods in the hands of your heavenly Father, for he knows what things ye have

need of. Let your prayer to him in this respect be always for such a portion only of the good things of this life, as he may see to be most fitting and convenient for you. And learn, with St. Paul, to be content in whatever state you may be in; whether you be full or hungry; whether you abound or suffer need.

But with respect to the gifts and graces of the Spirit, and the blessings which flow from the exercise of them; you cannot be too anxious in wishing for them; you cannot be too earnest in praying for them. Your labour must be, not so much for the meat that perisheth, as for that spiritual meat which endureth unto everlasting life. Every christian grace; every gift of the Holy Spirit; every blessing that can tend to the improvement and happiness of your souls must be constantly made the subject of your diligent and heartfelt supplication. You must endeavour to realize that expression of our Lord, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent

take it by force.” You must gain possession of it by the force of your faithful prayers: you must suffer no denial, no repulse: you must let nothing keep you back from your holy purpose: you must ask,—fervently and importunately ask, until you receive; you must seek, until you find; you must knock, until it be opened unto you.

But more particularly, pray for the pardon of your transgressions, and the acceptance of your services. Pray for the mortification of every sinful thought, and that you may be cleansed from all your secret faults. Pray for the enlightening influence of the Spirit, that you may be able to understand the Scriptures; and for strength and increase of grace, that you may be able to walk in the ways of holiness and virtue. Pray that you may have a repentance not to be repented of: that you may have a faith which will stand the trial of every temptation, and enable you to hold fast your confidence firm unto the end:

and that you may have such a love of God, and charity towards your brethren, as will enable you to forgive and bless your enemies ; to do acts of kindness and goodwill to those who hate you and speak evil of your name ; and to pray for those who despitefully use you, and persecute you without a cause.

But lastly and above all. Reflect that whatever be the subject of your prayers, and however devoutly and zealously offered up, they will be all vain and ineffectual, without a corresponding practice of godliness in the daily conduct of your lives. The integrity of your religious principles ; the soundness of your faith, and the sincerity of your professions must all be proved by the practices in which you engage, and by the fruits of holiness which shew themselves in your lives, during your intercourse with mankind. And this indeed is the great means of having all your petitions answered ; for it is only “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous

man" that "availeth much." Be ye therefore righteous, my brethren, even as he is righteous; and strive to be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Remember that you are always in his sight; that he marketh all your ways, and is privy to all your doings: and strive and pray that he may be *your* Father, and that you may be the children of his adoption and his love. Strive also to have his Son Jesus Christ for your Lord and Master, for your helper and supporter at all times. And strive, lastly, to have his ever blessed Spirit for your Comforter and Guide; to enlighten you in heavenly wisdom; to lead you through all the difficulties and vicissitudes of your earthly pilgrimage; and to bring you in safety to your everlasting home.

SERMON VIII.

ON THE DUTIES OF OUR PROFESSION.

2 Peter ch. 1. v. 10.

*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence
to make your calling and election sure.*

IN the passage of man through the various stages and vicissitudes of human life, it is of the greatest importance to his happiness, that he should have frequently and strongly impressed upon him the necessity of attending to the calls of the gospel, and of not forgetting or neglecting the high and holy duties of religion, amidst the labour and bustle of his worldly occupations. The heart of man is so wavering and deceitful; so prone to go astray and to fall

into transgression : the temptations to sin are so numerous and inviting : the cares and pleasures and employments of this world take often such deep hold upon the mind ; that without a constant stirring up, a constant warning to reflect upon a future state of things, man would be so lost and entangled in his earthly concerns, that the thought of an eternal world, and the care of providing for his immortal soul, would be a subject that would soon almost die away from his remembrance. Hence the blessing and advantage of the weekly return of the sabbath ; and of the opportunity which it gives unto men, to meditate upon those paths and duties of religion, and those everlasting rewards and promises of the gospel, which are indeed the “one thing needful,” and which demand their highest and best attention.

Even the pious and humble Christian ; the faithful disciple of Jesus ; the man who endeavours to form his life and character after the pattern of holy Scripture ;—even

he has sufficient need of being often reminded of his duty, and of having his thoughts fixed upon the spiritual and holy calling in which he professes to be engaged. But how much more is it necessary to stir up the minds of those persons, who are so immersed in the cares and pursuits of business; so intent upon labouring and toiling “for the meat that perisheth;” or so anxious to obtain the honours, or to enjoy the pleasures of time and sense;—that so far from walking daily and hourly with God, they hardly have the inclination, and they often consider it a trouble and inconvenience, to present themselves among the assemblies of his people on his own blessed sabbath, to offer him public worship in his holy temple! How much more is it necessary for these to be loudly called on to ponder the way in which they are proceeding; to pause and reflect upon what their condition may be in the sight of God; to put away, now and then for a time, the thought of their temporal affairs;

and according to the precept of our text, to give diligence to make their calling and election sure?

In a further meditation upon this precept, we are led to consider, in the first place, what it means;—what it is to make our calling and election sure.

Our calling, in this passage, means our Christian profession, independent and distinct from worldly circumstances. It is that state of life and behaviour, in which, as Christians, we profess to be walking. Ever since the first publication of the gospel, mankind have had this calling set before them, and have been invited to embrace it. They have been called upon to renounce the gross darkness of heathenism, and to enter into the light of divine revelation. They have been called from the power of Satan unto God; from a life of uncleanness to a life of holiness: from the bondage and corruption of the natural man, into the glorious liberty and purity of the gospel. This is our calling as Christians.

Our election means, God's pardon of our sins; his acceptance of our services; and our establishment in his favour. But we must remember that these do not always go together, for our Saviour himself saith, that "many are called, but few chosen." Many there are who enter into the gospel covenant, and call themselves the disciples of the Redeemer, who nevertheless are not elected to be partakers of his glory, because their lives are not consistent with that holy profession which they have outwardly embraced. They enter upon a religious course of life, but the most essential duties of religion are neglected by them. They cut off a few sins, but they do not part with them all. They wash the outside of the cup and the platter, but the inside remains impure as before. The difficulties of religion frighten and overcome them. The restraints which it enjoins: the mortifications which it calls upon them to submit to: the inward holiness and purity of heart which it inculcates upon them:—all these things are so

contrary to their prevailing feelings and dispositions ; they are so many stumbling-blocks in their path ; that they cannot persevere ; they cannot get over them. And therefore, though they be called, yet are they not chosen : though they have embraced the outward profession of Christianity, yet their election is not made sure.

Now in order to make our calling and election sure, we must be Christians in heart and in hope, and not only in name ; in the inward and spiritual part, as well as in the outward man. And not only so, but we must let our profiting appear unto all men. We must not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, from fear of the enemies of religion ; but we must let it be manifest to others, that we are sincere and in earnest in our holy calling ; and endeavour to persuade them by our good example, to become partakers of the same benefits, and children of the same promises. We must observe the divine command, delivered by our heavenly Master to his disciples, in his

sermon on the mount ; “ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

We must at the same time not rest contented with any progress we have made, but endeavour daily to improve our spiritual condition, and more and more to “ grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ;” pressing continually forward, with an humble but steadfast mind, in the faithful discharge of every religious obligation ; and striving, agreeably to St. Paul’s advice to the Philippians, to “ work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.”

To enable us, however, the more safely to make our calling and election sure, there are three principal duties which we must always be found in the exercise of. These are, the duty of repentance ; the duty of faith ; and the performance of good works ; and each of these I shall briefly consider.

As all the good that we can possibly do in this life will not, on its own account, entitle us to salvation ; so neither will it procure for us the pardon of our past transgressions. For every sin which we have committed ; for every ungodly practice which we have allowed ourselves to pursue ; for every neglect of duty to God or man which may justly be charged upon us, we must exercise deep and hearty repentance. It is only by a faithful discharge of this duty, that we can have any good ground for hoping that the mercy of God will be extended to us. We may begin to have faith in Jesus Christ ; we may amend our lives for the future ; but still, the sins and follies of our past time are all noted down in God's book ; and if our hearts be not bowed down in humiliation and self-abasement on account of them, we shall greatly deceive ourselves if we expect them to be forgiven.

The duty of repentance includes three particular branches : these are, first, con-

viction, or being sensible of our sinfulness in the sight of God: secondly, contrition, or a godly sorrow on account of sin: and thirdly, an utter renouncing and turning away from it. If any one would become a true disciple of the Saviour; if any one would desire to make his calling and election sure, this is the way he must begin, and these are the particulars which must strongly influence his mind. For unless a man be truly convinced of his sinful state, both by nature and by practice: unless he feel in his heart that he has offended God, and often acted in direct opposition to his holy laws: unless he be thoroughly impressed with a sense of his own unworthiness, and of his having justly merited the wrath and indignation of Almighty God: unless he be possessed with such dispositions as these, his repentance will be no repentance, and his attempt to proceed in the holy paths of religion will not be attended with success. No! the self-confidence in his own strength

must be destroyed ; the pride of human nature must be abased ; the Pharisaical opinion of his goodness must be rooted out : the breathings of his inmost soul must proceed from his lips in expressions like these, “ God be merciful to me a sinner,” “ Lord save me, I perish,” “ Jesus, Master, have mercy on me,” “ I acknowledge my wickedness, and my sin is ever before me,” “ Lord pardon my sin, for it is great.”

The man that would exercise true repentance, must not only be convinced that he is a sinner ; but he must be deeply sorry on account of his sins : he must lament that he has so frequently transgressed the commandments of his Maker, and must humble himself before him in dust and ashes, for it is the humble and contrite heart alone that God will not despise. It would be in vain that he should be sensible of the errors of his life, if the conviction did not fill his heart with grief, and cause it to yearn and to cry for mercy and forgiveness.

The last particular included in the duty of repentance, is an utter renunciation of sin, and a turning away from the practice of it ; and this is the most difficult part of all. A man may be very sensible of his guilt ; and his soul may be full of heaviness when he reflects upon the unholy practices in which he has been engaged : but it is not so easy to give them up and forsake them. The grace of God's Holy Spirit will, indeed, enable a man to overcome all these difficulties ; and it will be given to every man who faithfully seeks it, and makes a right use of it. But the grace of God is too frequently despised and set at nought ; and thus the sinner, although awakened to a proper sense of his spiritual condition, is yet unable to break the bands of sin, and returns again to his evil habits.

But my brethren, our repentance must be exercised in *all* its particulars ; even in that also of decidedly quitting the paths of sin, and of turning aside from the evil of

our ways: we must forsake the works of ungodliness at whatever cost: though our sins and our guilty pleasures be dear to us as an eye or a right hand, yet we must cut them off and return to the practice of them no more. The ridicule of an evil world, or of former evil companions must not frighten us; the scorn of profane and wicked men must have no influence on our minds: we must not regard the censure of the multitude, nor even of those with whom we may have been living in habits of close and intimate connexion: we must not fear them which are only able to kill the body; but we must rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell for ever. Thus shall we exercise the duty of repentance in all its essential particulars: and, *thus* repenting, our sins will be blotted out, and our iniquity forgiven.

The second duty which will enable us to make our calling and election sure, is the duty of faith. And he who truly exercises the repentance which is taught in the

gospel, will be the most likely to possess the saving faith of the gospel.

This faith will be the principle which will guide the devout and humble Christian in all his works, and in all his ways. It will lead him to a right contemplation of his Saviour in all his glorious offices : and it will instruct him rightly to apply to his own soul, the sacrifice and atonement which that Saviour made upon the cross for his redemption and salvation. It will teach him to put his trust in the mercy of God, to pardon his offences ; to strengthen his weakness ; to assist him in the various struggles of his Christian warfare ; to succour him in the hour of trial and difficulty ; and at length to lead him to the possession of his heavenly inheritance.

The faith of the Christian will also teach him, that he must hope for pardon and acceptance only through the merits of Jesus Christ. All expectation of mercy and favour on account of his own righteousness ; all dependence upon his own deservings

must be utterly cast away from his mind. However sincere may be his repentance ; however strong his faith ; however praiseworthy his conduct ; he must yet after all confess, that he is an unprofitable servant ; and must throw himself, for justification and salvation, simply and unreservedly, upon the merits and mediation of that Lamb of God, whose blood alone can take away the sin of the world.

The third duty I mentioned as enabling us to make our calling and election sure, is the performance of good works. Our belief in Christ will be of no avail to us, unless it bring forth in our daily conversation the fruits of holiness and virtue. It is by this means that we are to shew, not only to others, but also to prove to our own selves, that our faith is indeed the genuine faith of Christianity.

More particularly ; we must be forward in the performance of all the duties which we owe to our heavenly Father. We must love him with all our heart, and with all

our soul, and consider him as the object of our highest reverence and adoration, and of our warmest and most sincere affection. We must offer him our praises and thanksgivings for the many blessings which he lavishes upon us with an unsparing bounty, often when we least deserve them. We must render him the grateful tribute of our hearts for the many *spiritual* mercies which we have experienced at his hands; for having spared and continued our lives unto this day, and not cut us off in our sins, but given us more time for repentance and amendment. And above all, for his having published among us the glad tidings of salvation, and opened to us the cheering prospect of eternal blessedness.

We must also be careful in attending upon the outward means of grace which he has appointed for our growth and improvement in holiness. We must honour his holy sabbaths, and set them apart, not for the purposes of amusement, or idleness, or pleasure, as too many are in the habit

of doing ; but for the purposes of religious worship, of serious thought, of careful reflection upon our spiritual condition, and of anxious contemplation and longing for that heavenly rest beyond the grave, which remaineth for the people of God. On this sacred day, the concerns of this world must give way to the more momentous concerns of a world to come. We must bend our steps to God's holy temple ; and there, in the assembly of his worshippers, devote our hearts to his service, and with humble and teachable minds receive the instructions of heavenly wisdom.

The performance of good works includes also our duty towards our fellow creatures : that we should be perfectly just and upright in all our dealings with them, giving to every one his due, and doing unto all men as we would they should do unto us : that we should consider and love them all as brethren, and do all the good we are able both to their souls and bodies ; endeavouring to live in peace and harmony

with those around us ; not consulting too much our own profit and advantage, but having regard also to the comfort and happiness of others ; bearing with the impatience of the froward ; instructing the minds of the ignorant ; striving to reclaim the wayward and unthinking ; and not being too severe upon the faults of those who injure or offend us ; knowing that we ourselves also are prone to error, and that every day and every hour we breathe, we stand in need of the pity and the forgiveness of God.

I have thus, my brethren, very briefly, endeavoured to shew you what it is to make your calling and election sure ; and I have set before you some of the particulars of those duties, which your profession as Christians requires you to be engaged in. It now only remains that I briefly impress upon your minds the necessity of attending to these things, and of following the exhortation of St. Peter in the text, to “give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

The business and employments, the pleasures and advantages of this life are apt to engage the heart, and to have far too much influence over the minds of men : but my brethren, the preparations for a future state of existence, and the eternal welfare of your souls, are matters of infinitely greater importance to you. As light is superior to darkness : as the value of the soul is, beyond all comparison, greater than the value of the body : as the unchanging glories of heavenly blessedness in Paradise will be preferable to the never-dying miseries of hell : —in the same proportion do the duties of religion, the ways and works of godliness demand your most anxious care and attention above the fleeting concerns of this life. The comfort and satisfaction arising from earthly gratifications are but short in their duration, and mixed with much sorrow and disappointment. The ways and practices of religion alone are ways of pleasantness and peace, and never leave a sting in the heart behind them.

Take heed then, my Christian brethren, to be found diligent in pursuing the prize which is set before you in the gospel. Set not your affections upon earthly things ; but strive to obtain an interest in those heavenly treasures which are of far higher price. Spend not your best talents, and your best days and years upon the perishable and fading things of time ; but rather “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness ;” and whatever else is necessary for your temporal happiness will not be withheld from you by your heavenly Father.

Thus will you answer the great and important end of your existence : and thus will you not fail “to make your calling and election sure.” And when you shall be called upon to render up your soul into the hands of him who gave it, you will obey the summons with an humble, but joyful hope, that it will be graciously accepted, and will dwell for ever in the presence of your Redeemer.

SERMON IX.

ON THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF
CHILDREN.

Proverbs ch. 22. v. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go :
and when he is old, he will not depart
from it.*

THESE are the words of Solomon, of whom we learn from Scripture, that he was the wisest of men ; filled with all understanding and learning, and possessing a knowledge of all things under the sun. He had given himself to know wisdom from his youth, and the Lord had blessed his labours, and made him eminently successful. He deeply studied the nature and circumstances of

mankind ; their practices and habits ; their principles and characters ; the influence of good and evil upon their minds, and the natural tendency of all their ways : and he was therefore well qualified to give advice upon so important a subject as that of teaching mankind how they should be brought up, in order to their future well-being and happiness. “Train up a child (says he) in the way he should go : and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

The text will supply us with sufficient meditation, suitable for the subject we are this day to consider. And I might begin my discourse by observing, that the Lord has surely visited this place, and caused his blessing to rest upon it. In this neighbourhood, so lately a desolate and neglected wilderness, a tabernacle has been raised to his honour and glory ; a temple has been built for the worship of his creatures ; for the edification of his people ; for the assembling and gathering together of the sheep

of his pasture. And now, in addition to this great and exceedingly valuable blessing, he has blessed us yet more largely and abundantly, in enabling us this day to open out a Sunday School, for the religious instruction of the *younger* members; for the gathering together the *lambs* of his flock; and bringing them early, and keeping them safely within his fold. Truly I may say, and every right minded person, I think, will gratefully join with me in saying, that the Lord hath surely visited this place! Oh that the visitation may be regarded as it ought to be! Oh that the blessing may not be despised and set at nought! Too true it is, that human nature is the same now that it ever has been. Too true it is that the mercies and blessings which are sent to us by a gracious Providence, are received by many with careless and unthankful hearts, the same now as they were in times of old. When we consider the circumstances of mankind, in all ages of the world, the heart

is impressed with a feeling of sadness and sorrow, which nothing earthly can remove. When we look back into the ages of our forefathers, and contemplate the transactions which took place in their days. When we take a view of the scenes which have been acted in the world from the fall of our first parents to the present time. When we reflect upon the wickedness and guilt, which, even in the first period of mankind, overspread the earth to such a degree, as to compel the Almighty to cause all flesh to perish, Noah and his family alone excepted. When, during the life of Abraham and Lot, we behold the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; and in after times, under Moses, the idolatry and perverseness of the Israelites. When we look at the horrid massacres of the ancients; and at the wars and persecutions of later times, which deluged the earth with blood, and almost made it tremble with the iniquity thereof. When we look around us in our own days, and behold what numbers

of our fellow-creatures there are, who not only have no sense of religion or virtue on their minds; but who regard with contempt and ridicule every thing that has the appearance of godliness. When we seriously think and meditate upon these impressive and mournful circumstances, we may indeed anxiously ask ourselves the question, What is the cause of all this? Alas! we can too easily and too certainly be answered. The apostacy and corruption of human nature has been the fruitful source of all the guilt, of all the pollutions, and of all the wretchedness, which has, from the transgression of Adam to the present moment, stained the face of this once beautiful, and once innocent world. No sooner had sin entered into the heart of man, than he lost the perfect image of his divine Creator, and became prone to every thing that is evil. To this, as to the most deadly enemy of mankind, may we trace the beginning of all our sorrows. Sin cast our first parents out of Paradise. Sin

brought down the deluge that drowned a profane and corrupt world. Sin drew from heaven, upon the guilty cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the fire and brimstone of a justly offended and angry God. And in sin has originated all the mischiefs and all the misery, which has overspread the earth like a pestilence.

One way, however, there is, by which the misfortunes that it causes, and the dangers which it threatens may be avoided: and that is, by turning to the Lord our God: by casting off the works of darkness, and putting on us the armour of light: by withdrawing from the evil of our ways, and embracing the pure and holy religion of the Saviour of the world: by repenting faithfully and sincerely of our sins, and leading a new and holy life, agreeable to the commandments of God. This is the way by which men may escape destruction: these are the means which will lead them on in the road to happiness. But alas! how many thousands are there who never attend

to them, who never think of them. The feeling and benevolent mind is incessantly afflicted by the conduct and example of multitudes, who seem utterly regardless of all the fatal consequences of sin ; who neglect and despise all the gracious proffers of mercy ; and who are hastening, with eager and blind rapidity, to their final and irretrievable misery.

Painful, however, though this prospect may be ; we need not, we must not despair, with God's blessing, of making it better. If those who have arrived at years of maturity and manhood withdraw themselves from our churches, and shun our reproofs and instructions. If we cannot find means to make any impression on those who think they have no need of repentance, and fancy that their day of thoughtless and guilty enjoyment is long to continue : yet we may hope, that by attending to the nurture and education of our *younger* brethren, we may be the humble though happy instruments, of forming a future generation of men and

women, who shall know, and shall practise in their day, the things that belong to their everlasting peace.

Well had it been for mankind, if they had not fallen from their first state of innocence ; but since we all experience the consequences of that fall, our best and wisest aim is to endeavour to counteract the baneful effects of the corruption of human nature, by instilling into the minds, particularly of children, principles of religion and virtue. “Train up a child in the way he should go : and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” By early imbuing the infant mind with sentiments of goodness and truth, we establish an effectual means of preventing many of those sorrows and misfortunes, which in after life they must otherwise experience in the world. By endeavouring to fix in their yet tender and pliable hearts the simple but sublime truths of our holy religion. By impressing them with a deep sense of their own unworthiness, and of the great holiness and

majesty of the Supreme and Almighty Creator. By shewing them the loveliness of virtue, and the hatefulness of vice ; and inspiring them with a lively attachment to the one, and an utter abhorrence of the other. By teaching them, with respect to religion, that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace : and warning them in the most earnest and feeling manner, that the way of vice leads to shame, reproach, and endless misery. By striving to act in this manner towards the weak and tender members of the flock of Christ, we lay a sure and strong foundation in their hearts, which we may humbly hope, with the blessing of divine grace, shall enable them to escape the contagion of the wickedness by which they are surrounded, and to proceed in a course of Christian piety and virtue : which shall enable them to become useful and respectable members of society : which shall be the means of securing to them, not only the esteem and love of good men upon earth ; but also the

tender and merciful regards of their Father which is in heaven ; and shall also procure for them, through the merits of our blessed Redeemer, the happy enjoyment of an eternal and unchangeable existence.

Such are some of the inestimable advantages to be derived from the religious instruction of our children ; advantages far superior to every other which can arise from human attainments, and therefore justly meriting, in a very high degree, the earnest and attentive consideration of all who are interested or concerned in the improvement and happiness of mankind.

It is much to be regretted, that there are many, both parents and others who have the charge of children, who either from want of ability or opportunity, are quite unable to attend to the education of their children themselves. Such however, if they feel any solicitude for the welfare of their offspring, will be anxious to obtain a remedy for their own deficiencies. If they cannot instruct their children themselves,

they will be earnest in applying to those who are both able and willing to instruct them : and if they can by any means procure for them knowledge, especially that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation, then they will not surely, in a spirit of heedless unconcern, suffer them to perish for lack of it.

Hence therefore appear the utility and advantage of Sunday Schools ; and we have the satisfaction of knowing, that in this highly favoured country they every where abound. Yes, the Sunday School holds out to the indigent and unenlightened parent, a nursery for the instruction of his children which claims his most grateful acknowledgments. How delightful is the feeling which we experience, when we reflect, that regularly as the Sabbath morn returns, many thousands of children, during their attendance at the Sunday Schools, are taught those pure lessons and precepts of Christianity, which they have no other means of acquiring ; and which are likely to stamp

the features of their future character and condition, not only in this perishable world ; but in a world beyond the grave, where the soul shall never die, but exist through eternity.

To you who are parents, and whose children are the objects of our consideration, I would now particularly address myself. I cannot entertain a doubt, but that you are anxious for the welfare of your offspring : but let me ask if your anxiety is attended with the exertion on your part which is necessary to produce the desired effects ? The offer of religious instruction is now made to your children : see that you are not chargeable with neglecting your duty in seeking it for them. I observe a great number of children in this neighbourhood also, who are quite old enough to come to church, but who have seldom or never been seen there. I put the question to those parents among you who have neglected your duty in this respect, and I ask you if you can give a sufficient reason

why they do not come to God's house? Are they engaged in any employment which is agreeable to the sanctity of the Lord's day? Are they reading their Bibles, or receiving religious instruction at home? Oh no! Through your indolence and indifference they are suffered to grow up in an early disregard of the Lord's day, and to engage in whatever pursuits their froward dispositions may lead them into. Is it that you do not know, or that you do not enough consider, that whatever habits they are allowed to contract, whatever sentiments or opinions are formed in their minds while they are young, they generally carry them through life with them? Are you not aware that your children, as well as yourselves have souls to be saved;—souls, for the purchase and redemption of which the blessed Son of God came down on earth and shed his precious blood? Think then I beseech you, whether it be not of the greatest importance, that they should be early accustomed to habits of religion

and piety. Do not foolishly imagine that they will become wise and good of themselves : they will not choose the right path without it be pointed out to them, and they are strongly urged to proceed in it ; for the heart of man is prone to evil from his infancy, and requires the wholesome and judicious use of frequent chastisement and discipline, to correct its inclination to error, and to establish it in uprightness. Oh be watchful therefore over the interests of your children. Reason with yourselves, how much their future happiness depends upon the proper manner in which you now bring them up ; and reflect,—seriously and anxiously reflect upon the severely fatal consequences of your indifference about them ; for if you suffer them to follow the bent of their own wayward inclinations, without rebuke or restraint : if you allow them to grow up without endeavouring to provide for them the instruction and knowledge which is necessary for their well-being : if you leave them to pass their most

docible years in an utter disregard of the Sabbath and all its institutions; you are thereby inflicting a deep wound in the future peace of their souls, which it will be almost impossible to cure. Yes, if you are thus careless and neglectful of the instruction and improvement of your children, you are effectually training them up to drink the bitterest sorrows; and are preparing to bring down upon your own heads the dreadful consequences of their misery. O beware then of trifling with their happiness. Begin, before it be too late, to attend to the cultivation of their minds, to the improvement of their understandings, and to the fixing their hearts on the precepts and practice of religion. Teach them to love and to follow the Saviour, who always encouraged little children to come unto him. Be anxious, and be careful that they do not grow up to despise his gospel, and to tread him under their feet. Call to mind those days when they hanged upon your breast, and clung

around your knees in their infant purity and innocence : when your sorrows have many a time been beguiled, and your cares have many a time been soothed by their artless and endearing prattle ; and then ask yourselves the question, how can you suffer these once tender and beloved innocents to be neglected ! how can you bear the thought of those sweet pledges of God's mercy to you being led astray by the folly and corruption of a wicked world, and you yourselves all the while look tamely on, as if it were a matter of the utmost indifference to you !

Happy should I be, if I could by *any* means impress upon your minds the great importance of attending to the religious instruction of your children. But I would rather urge you by the tenderest and most affectionate motives which can stimulate the exertions of a parent. If ever you have felt pleasure at the smiling caresses of your infant : if your heart has ever been gladdened by its enlivening and engaging conversation :

if you have ever been led to offer up a prayer for its future happiness ; then be watchful over it, and preserve it from immorality. Bring it up in the fear and admonition of the Lord : train it to habits and practices of godliness ; and it will respect and esteem you while you live ; and will cherish and bless your memory when you shall be laid in the dust. You will have the conscious satisfaction of reflecting, that you have endeavoured to do your duty to your offspring : and you will find, to your great consolation and comfort, that while you have been providing for the happiness of your children, you have infinitely added to your own.

I have thus endeavoured to set before you, my Christian brethren, the necessity of attending to the religious education of your children. And as many have no other means of obtaining such education, I have shewn you the usefulness and advantage of Sunday Schools, where thousands of poor children are weekly drawn together, to

receive instruction from the words of wisdom, and to learn to lisp the praises of Almighty and redeeming love.

Be it your care then, my beloved hearers, that your children attend to be instructed at the Sunday School; and also that they are not kept away from the house of God, whenever it is open for the performance of his holy worship. And whilst you are doing this for your children, do not forget what belongs to yourselves. Be mindful of your own conduct. Be punctual and constant in the performance of your own religious duties; and take care to set good examples to your children. You must not only train *them* up in the way they should go; that is, in the way of righteousness; but you yourselves must walk in that way, and cause them to follow you in it. If you would have peace and happiness in your families, it is to be found only in seeking and fearing the Lord, and in living after the rule of his holy gospel. If you would have your children grow up to be good men and women, you

must teach them to be good now. Let them learn to remember their Creator in the day of their youth, and he will not forget nor forsake them, when they come to old age and their strength faileth them.

Finally, my brethren, I beseech you all, whether you have children—whether you are personally interested in the Sunday School or not;—I beseech you all to offer up your prayers to Almighty God, to send his blessing upon the work which has this day been begun among you. On his favour we depend: to his aid we trust for success in our undertaking. Without his gracious assistance, vain would be our efforts, fruitless would be our best exertions. Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God alone can give the increase. Let our prayers for help be presented before him in sincerity and faith; and for the Redeemer's sake they will not be presented in vain.

SERMON X.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

Matthew ch. 22. v. 11, 12, 13.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

THE parable from which these words are taken, was intended by our Saviour to represent, in a forcible manner, the particular circumstances of the gospel dispensation, under the image of a marriage feast.

The Jews, as being the peculiar people of God, were the first to whom the covenant of mercy was offered. But they despised and rejected the gracious gift, and persecuted unto death Him that was sent to bestow it. Hence, having shewn themselves so unworthy of the blessing, the glad tidings of salvation were then to be tendered to the Gentiles; and all nations, even to the uttermost parts of the earth, were to be invited to become partakers of the glorious privileges and blessings of the gospel. This was agreeable to a prediction of the prophet Isaiah; "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for he hath glorified thee."

We are informed in the parable, that the wedding was furnished with guests: the meaning of which is, that the Redeemer's gospel was at length furnished with professors. But that they were not all sincere, we learn from the words of my text

wherein we are told that the king found one, who had not on a wedding garment. From the dreadful punishment which was inflicted upon this offender, we are taught to beware of the fatal consequences of hypocrisy and deceit in the concerns of religion ; and to take heed that we are Christians, not only by profession, but by practice ;—not only that we come to the marriage feast, and embrace the religion of Jesus Christ ; but that we strive also to be clothed in the wedding garment of a sound faith, and unspotted purity of life.

In further discoursing upon this subject, I purpose, with the divine blessing, to consider some of those particulars in the characters of men, wherein they may be said to be without the wedding garment : and then to exhort my hearers to that sincerity and earnestness in religion, without which we can have no right to expect any other than to be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness.

Among all the qualities or virtues of the

human mind, there is none more pleasing in the sight of God than sincerity and uprightness; and the Scriptures promise especial blessings to all such as exercise them. “Who, (saith David) shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in his holy place? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart: he that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent: he that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully: he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”

Such is the value of truth before the Majesty of heaven. And yet among those who have taken upon them the profession of Christianity, how few are there who do not mingle much unworthiness, much deceit

and delusion, even in their best performances ! And what numbers there are, to whom the words of our blessed Lord may be too justly applied, even when their outward conduct appears blameless in the eyes of men ; “ Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment ? ”

The first person whom I shall describe as being destitute of the wedding garment, is the drunkard : and though it may be readily allowed by others, that a character of this kind can have no title to the blessings and promises of holy Scripture ; yet it is very difficult to convince the person who follows the practice of drunkenness, of the exceeding wickedness of his conduct, or of the danger which threatens to overwhelm his soul. Could he be brought to a proper sense of his condition ; could he reflect with an unbiassed and impartial mind upon the circumstances of his case, he would at once perceive, that if he still continued in the pursuit of this evil propensity, there could be nothing in prospect

for him but a fearful looking for of judgment, and the fiery indignation of God. But let us examine the particulars of his conduct: and be it remembered that I am here speaking, not only of those unhappy men who have utterly given themselves up to this vice, and to that entire degradation of character to which it generally leads: I am speaking not of those only who have an utter contempt of religion and its ministers; who despise the ordinances of holy worship, and never enter into the house of God to hear the warning voice of his appointed messengers. I am speaking of those persons also who have been brought up, in some degree at least, under the influences of Christianity, and who profess themselves Christians: who do occasionally attend upon the services of religion; and who in the moments of calm and sober reflection, are persuaded of the realities of the gospel faith.

Let us then attend to the circumstances of a person who is addicted to the vice of

drunkenness. God has given to him an immortal soul, and endowed him with faculties admirably adapted to the purposes of his being; but how does he debase the noble faculties of his soul; how does he prostitute those powers of his mind which were bestowed on him to guide him to happiness! His understanding becomes darkened, and closes against every improvement; his reason is perverted, and unable to form a correct judgment in any matter of importance: his conscience becomes hardened, and fails to arouse his better feelings to an impression of remorse, or to a sense of the necessity of repentance: the whole man is degraded to the level of the beasts of the earth; and he maketh himself a by-word among children, and a laughing stock to fools.

Let us consider also the harm which is done to his worldly circumstances. As the prophet saith, "He layeth out his substance for that which is not bread, and spendeth his money upon that which

satisfieth not.” And how often does it happen, that his expenses upon this baneful practice reduce him to a state of poverty and ruin ! He makes himself incapable of managing his concerns, and therefore he does not prosper ; and the natural consequence is that he finds himself in a state of want and wretchedness.

Thus far however he may proceed, without materially injuring any one but himself. But if the ties of blood connect him with other persons : if he be a husband, and the father of a family ; how much bitterer is the misery, how much more cruel are the wrongs which he brings upon them ; and how much deeper also on this account is the guilt which he incurs ! Where can be the thought of his home, and of those beings who should look up to him for their guidance and support, as they pass on together through the pilgrimage of life ? Where can be the feelings of care and anxiety for those persons to whom he is united by the strongest ties of nature ;—

feelings which the God of nature has implanted in the heart of every creature under heaven? Alas, the thought of his home is dissipated, the feeling of natural affection for his family is loosened from his breast, by the destructive influence of the practice in which he indulges! His sorrowful wife may picture to him their distress; his starving children may cry to him for bread; but his heart has become callous to the one, and his poverty prevents him from supplying the other!

Let us suppose that the sense of religion is not *entirely* effaced from his mind, and that he sometimes goes to the public worship of God's house; yet what benefit does he derive from his attendance there? In the prayers and praises which are offered up to the Lord; in the lessons which are read from the Bible; in the instructions which are delivered from the pulpit;—in all these he hears himself justly condemned; and if there be any power of conscience left within him, it must rouse the feelings of

his soul to a perception of his wretchedness; and too often he returns to his besetting propensity, and endeavours to bury the thought of his misery in the forgetfulness of intoxication.

Many persons who indulge in this sinful habit, are cut off by accidents in the prime of their age, and their souls launched into eternity without the preparation of a moment: and many others destroy their health, and bring on premature dissolution. And although they may have some intimation of their approaching end, and some time given them for repentance; yet how often is it of no avail? They have gone on so long in the pursuit of this wickedness, that their faculties have become stupified, and cannot answer the purposes for which they were graciously bestowed by the Almighty Creator: they cannot see their great need of a Saviour who is mighty to deliver; because they are unable to perceive the danger of their spiritual condition; they cannot exercise a faithful and sincere

repentance, because their heart has been so long hardened through the deceitfulness of their sin. And thus, with a faint repentance, and perhaps with fainter hopes of mercy, their eyes are for ever closed on this world, and their souls summoned to the judgment seat of God.

See now in what condition the soul stands before him who came into the world to redeem it by his own blood. Is it clad in the robes of righteousness and faith? Is it covered with the wedding garment of the Lamb, and qualified to enter that feast of eternal blessedness which is prepared for his faithful servants? Ah no, brethren; none can suppose it! It is clothed with the garment of shame and pollution: it stands trembling and speechless before the tribunal of Jehovah; and the voice of the Son of God consigns it to its fearful destiny: "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness."

Perhaps you may think that I have given

too high a colouring to this picture, and that the case we have been considering is one of rare occurrence. Would to God that it were so, and that it were not a common case ! But the truth is too glaring to be disputed ; and I fear it is in the remembrance of most of you now present, that such cases as these, and their fatal consequences, have happened in your own neighbourhood.

It is probable that those who now hear me, may feel that they are never likely to fall into such a case as we have had set before us ; and I sincerely pray God that they may not. But beware, my brethren, of the first approaches to it ; and “ Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” The greatest sins have proceeded from *small beginnings* ; and an hour idly spent now and then for the sake of company, or of passing away vacant time, may lead to most ruinous and destructive consequences ; even to the loss of health, and all the comforts and prospects of this

life; and to the loss of the soul in the life to come.

The person whom I shall next consider as not having the wedding garment, is the profane swearer; the man who is guilty of a breach of the third commandment by taking the name of the Lord his God in vain.

That the habit of profane swearing greatly prevails, no one I think will deny. It is frequently observable in all classes of the community; high and low, learned and ignorant; among those who have no religion; and among those also who pretend to have some religion. Neither will it be denied, that the practice is justly to be hated and avoided by the Christian; and that it is abominable in the sight of God. For though men seem to think so lightly of it, and many use it in their common and familiar conversation; yet is the guilt of it on that account not lessened, but aggravated, and the punishment will be more severe. For let us reflect and consider:—

what presumption is it, without due regard and reverence, to mention God's name; and with unhallowed breath to profane that great and glorious, that most holy, that fearful and terrible name of the Lord our God, the great Creator, the mighty Sovereign, the dreadful Judge of all the world; that name which is adored by the angels in heaven with the profoundest submission; the very thought of which should strike awe through our hearts; and the very mention whereof should make us tremble!—What extreme wickedness is it in a person who is addicted to this profane habit, every now and then to call down Almighty God from heaven to attend to his trivial affairs; without any cause to rush upon a curse; to defy that vengeance, the least touch or breath of which 'can dash us into nothing, or thrust us down into endless woe?

Let us consider also, that swearing is a sin, of all others, peculiarly provoking to the divine judgment. God is hardly so

much concerned to punish any other sin as this; for he is bound in honour to vindicate his name from contempt and profanation: and the bold swearer dares him to hear, and braves him to judge and punish his wickedness.

The practice of the profane swearer is also exceedingly disgusting to every person who has a proper sense of religion in his mind, and a just and devout regard to the glory of the Divine Majesty. The apostle James exhorted, "But above all things my brethren swear not." And a greater than St. James left his disciples this precept, "Let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." But the swearer disregards such precepts as these, and seems to think that his bare and simple word will have no effect, unless it be mixed with oaths and blasphemies. And if any thing crosses or puts him out of his way, he immediately calls upon God to send down a curse, either upon his own soul,

or upon the souls of others ; and he fancies that his anger will make a far greater impression, when it is accompanied with these horrid imprecations.

But the person who is addicted to swearing does not require to be crossed or provoked to make him give way to this practice ; for the curse flows naturally from his lips, and mingles with his most ordinary talk.

Where now, do you suppose, will such a person as this stand at the judgment ? What will be *his* situation when the heavenly bridegroom cometh ? What kind of a garment will he be clothed in ? Will such an one as he find himself addressed in those heart-thrilling words of the Redeemer, “ Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ” ?—Will the swearer be made partaker of eternal blessings, when his mouth in this world has been filled with cursings ? Will the Lord hold him guiltless, when his daily practice has been to take his name in

vain? Would the praises and hallelujahs of the faithful;—would the songs of heavenly glory be suited to those lips which have here been accustomed to oaths and profanations? No, my brethren; the question of the Eternal King, when he cometh to see the guests, will thrill through his soul, “Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?”—and the sentence of his punishment which will immediately follow, will fill him with bitterness and horror; “Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness.”

A third character who is without the wedding garment is the Sabbath-breaker; and many persons are chargeable with this sin, who seem to be little aware that they are doing wrong. The evil is so common; such numbers practise it; that the example of the multitude seems to make the guilt of it less, and therefore it is not so much thought of. But the guilt is not less on that account; for the commandment to

keep holy the Sabbath day would still hold good, even if all the world were disobedient to it; and the punishment of the Sabbath-breaker will not be less certain, though the example of many persons around him may seem to countenance his ungodly and unchristian practices.

But let us consider who is meant by this character. It includes not only unbelievers, but many professing Christians likewise: not only those who make a mock at sacred things, but many who make a shew of religion. The best criterion to judge by is the commandment of God, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." But how is this blessed day kept by many persons? By some it is used as an ordinary day of labour or business; and as a fit opportunity of examining the proceedings, the gains, or the losses of the past week. By others it is spent in the pursuit of sensual gratifications, and made a day of visiting and going from home; as if the command had

been to devote six days to labour, and the seventh to pleasure.

The chief duty to be attended to on the Sabbath day is the public worship of God in his own holy temple; but how many are there who seem to be utterly indifferent whether they go to his temple or not? How many are there even this day whose feet should have drawn them to this place, who are now idling at home, or doing that work which should be done on the other days of the week? It is certain that those who wilfully or carelessly neglect the public service of the church on the Lord's day, cannot be passing their time well or profitably at home. The ordinances of religion are of God's appointment, and no one may neglect them and be guiltless. The public homage of the soul is due to the Lord on his own day, from every one who bears the impress of humanity; and he who refuses or neglects to pay it, despises the commandment of his Maker and selleth his soul to the service of mammon.

But the time will not allow me to discourse further upon this subject at present : with the good blessing of God I shall bring it before you again at another opportunity. In the mean time let me entreat you deeply to reflect upon what has been now said. Apply the instructions which have been delivered to the benefit of your own souls, and seriously and steadily fix your minds upon the religious performance of all your duties. I have attempted to describe to you the characters and evil consequences of drunkenness and of vain swearing ; and I have briefly touched upon the wickedness of profaning the Lord's day. Take heed that ye be not found guilty, even in the smallest degree, of these unworthy and destructive practices. Meditate upon the text which we have this day been considering ; and endeavour to be clothed in the wedding garment of an holy faith and virtuous conversation. Put away from your hearts every evil inclination, every sinful desire, every unholy wish ; and

constantly pray to God, for Christ's sake, to fill your souls with the influences of his blessed Spirit, that you may be able to refuse the evil, and choose the good. He alone it is who can strengthen you with his grace for the performance of your duty ; and he has promised in his blessed word, that they who seek him shall assuredly find him ; and that the humble and devout supplication of the returning and penitent sinner shall not be offered to him in vain.

SERMON XI.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

Matthew ch. 22. v. 12.

And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?

IN the discourse which I delivered to you from this text last Sabbath day, I endeavoured to draw your minds to the consideration of such characters among men, as might be said to be without the wedding garment; and for this purpose I set before you, as strongly as I was able, the evil and destructive consequences of drunkenness, and of profane swearing, and of Sabbath-breaking. I am indeed too well aware,

that many of those persons who stood most in need of such a discourse were not present in this place to hear it. For they who delight themselves in the ways of drunkenness: they whose propensity it is to blaspheme, and to name the holy name of the Lord with unhallowed and profane lips: they who love to be found among the despisers of his Sabbaths, and the mockers of his holy things:—such as these are not often to be seen attending the duties of his holy religion. They have other business to do on that day; their time is spent in a different manner; they are occupied in the services, and they are working for the wages of a different master. Yet although the persons who are habitually guilty of these wicked practices seldom or never come to God's house, and therefore cannot receive much benefit from religious instruction; it is nevertheless to be feared, that among those who do come, there may be some who are occasionally, and in a lesser degree, inclined to the same

practices; and upon whom the preaching of the word produces little or no impression. The power of sin is so strong; the inclinations of man's corrupt heart are so prone to evil; and the examples of wicked men are brought so frequently before the view, that except a man exert every faculty, and use every means which God has put within his reach, the seed of the gospel will fall upon a barren and unfruitful soil, and the man will remain the same as before;—his mind alienated from the life of God, and his heart hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

And may I not appeal to some who are now before me, for a proof of the observation which has just been made? Ask yourselves, my brethren, whether the case be not indeed so. What good effect is produced by the preaching of the word, and by the weekly ministrations of the gospel religion? What new duties have you been led to perform which you did not perform before? What religious habits have you

acquired? What evil practices; what sinful indulgences have you left off? What improvement is there in your private character and conduct, and in your dealings with the rest of mankind? With some indeed, we are well persuaded, there is a great improvement, a most blessed change. They have seen the necessity of giving to religion the chief place in their hearts, and they cherish it as their best inheritance. They feel that the eternal welfare of their souls is of far greater importance to them than the passing concerns of this life; and they are anxious and careful to choose that good part, and to gain an interest in that heavenly treasure, which will comfort and sustain them, when the world and its possessions shall remain no longer.

But with others the case is widely and lamentably different. They come here perhaps, and sit week after week; they hear sermon after sermon delivered to them; they have line upon line, and precept upon precept; they have the voice of Moses and

the prophets sounding in their ears ; yea, they have the voice of one risen from the dead, calling upon them to repent, and offering to bestow upon them the only true happiness, both in this world and in the next : yet are their hearts not moved : yet do they heed the heavenly message no more than the wind which passes by them !

From whence arises this indifference to spiritual things ? What is the cause of this deadness to the best interests of their souls ? Alas, the cause is too evident ! Their heart is not right in the sight of God ; and therefore they have no part nor lot in the blessed portion of his faithful disciples. They make this world, and the things of this world, their God ; they seek only to gain its perishing possessions ; they follow its ungodly customs and practices ; they imitate its evil examples ; they are partakers of its follies and its vices. These are the things which hold their hearts in bondage ; these are the hindrances which prevent the exhortations and instructions of Christianity from

producing any good effect upon them ; which make the gospel of the Redeemer little more than a dead letter, and almost cause it to be preached to them in vain.

These are melancholy reflections, brethren : would to God there was not too much reason for them ! And oh ! if there be among you any to whom they apply, attend I beseech you to the whisperings of your conscience within you ; and determine, by God's grace, that they shall apply to you no longer. Deem them not harsh nor unfriendly reproofs ; they are spoken in love for your perishing souls. I say them not to grieve you ; I say them not to pain nor offend you : but with a sincere desire for your happiness, I would most earnestly and affectionately call upon you to reflect upon your ways, and to consider whether your conduct be such as God can approve : whether you be followers and imitators of those, who take up the cross, and walk in the footsteps of Jesus ;—or of those who esteem the cross of Christ a

joyless and unthankful burden, and pursue only the gratifications of the flesh. The followers of the cross may be few; and we know indeed that they are few: and the followers of the world may be a vast multitude; for there is a wide gate, and a broad way leading to destruction; and many, many heedless travellers are rapidly journeying to its fearful end. But I warn you my beloved brethren not to follow the multitude, nor to do evil because you see others do it: I warn you not to set your affections upon the unholy pursuits and pleasures of this world; for the world passeth away and the lusts thereof. But I warn you to turn your feet unto God's testimonies: I warn you to seek an interest in that blood of the Saviour, in that fountain of salvation, in which your souls may be washed and purified from every pollution, and clothed in the wedding garment of righteousness and faith. Do these things, and your souls shall live.

In further illustration of our text, I shall

proceed to consider some other particulars in the characters of those persons, who may be said to be without the wedding garment.

I noticed, in my discourse to you last Lord's day, the cases of the drunkard, and the profane swearer; and shall now consider the character of the Sabbath-breaker, which was only briefly mentioned.

The Sabbath-breaker is one who does not regard the day which the Lord hath set apart for his own glory, and for the spiritual edification of his creatures; but who spends it in idleness and sloth; in the pursuit of worldly business or pleasure; or in practices of folly and wickedness. And it is to be feared that many persons may justly be charged with profaning this holy day, who would fain persuade themselves that they are not guilty in this respect.

From a consideration of the nature of the duties which more particularly belong to this day, it will be easy to ascertain how

far our conduct agrees with the commandment that we should keep it holy. In the first place then let us remember, that it is set apart for the public worship of God. Every creature who bears the stamp of the divine image; more particularly every one who professes himself a Christian, is bound to serve and worship God in the public assemblies of the saints, and in the place where he hath chosen to record his name. The house of God is opened; the minister of Christ is appointed to proclaim the glad tidings of the gospel to the people; and if any one refuses or neglects to hear, he despises the commandment, and tramples upon the authority of his Maker. Almighty God has sanctified the Sabbath to himself, and he will be honoured in the ordinances of his own appointment. Yet how many are there who do not render him the homage of their obedience on his own blessed day! how many who make the most frivolous excuses, and suffer the most trifling circumstances to keep them away

from his holy worship ! There are not a few, I believe, who absent themselves on account of their mean apparel. If they could be clothed in purple and fine linen, they would come to the house of God : but because their dress is not so costly as that of some who assemble there, they are afraid to go, lest they should be disesteemed, or little set by. But such a sentiment arises from pride, and is therefore evil. The Lord looketh not on the outward appearance : he looketh upon the heart : he is no respecter of persons : he does not forget the rich ; he has among them many faithful and devoted followers : but his eyes are especially open to behold the poor. It was ever the custom of the Redeemer of men, to single out the objects of his favour from among the meanest and most disregarded of the people. It is not the appearance of expensive attire that will for a moment attract his regard. The best and most acceptable garment in the sight of God, even the wedding garment mentioned in

the text, is not the adorning of the outward person, but a meek and humble spirit, and an earnest desire to please him, and to be found stedfast in doing his will.

Some persons are prevented from attending the public services of religion, not from any dislike to them, but from a spirit of indolence and sloth, which will not let them take the trouble to prepare themselves on a Sabbath morning. They imitate the conduct of the five foolish virgins, and when the hour of prayer arrives, they are not ready, and cannot come. They may perhaps tell you that the Sabbath was appointed for a day of rest, and that they use it as such. True it is a day of rest; but it is a holy rest, and not the rest of the sluggard: it is a rest from worldly labour, and a rest from sin: a day in which to work for God, and to provide food for the soul.

I lament to think that others are kept from the house of God by being engaged in worldly business. It may doubtless be

necessary to do some things on the Sunday. Farmers must attend to their cattle ; householders must attend to their families ; and other duties besides must also take up a portion of the day. But surely it cannot be necessary that any of this business should have to be done just at that time when the God of mercy is speaking to his people by his appointed messengers, and instructing them in the things which belong to their eternal welfare. People, if they chose, might so arrange their plans, that the business which it is necessary to attend to on the Lord's day should not interfere with those more important duties, which the religion of Jesus Christ especially requires of them. And if their hearts are in earnest in their profession ; if they are truly desirous to please God, and to become partakers of the blessings of his gospel, they certainly will so arrange their plans. Except in the case of sickness, it is seldom necessary that more than one person should be left at home to provide for a family.

And if a man be truly religious, and have not young children to take care of, he will endeavour, as often as possible, to bring every member of his household to the public worship of God. It is a pity, if it could be avoided, that even one should be left at home, and lose the words of eternal life ; for every soul is equally precious in the estimation of him, who came into the world and shed his blood for the redemption of his creatures.

There are other practices which people frequently engage in, and which sometimes prevent their coming to church ; such as going from home, paying visits, and receiving company. These things are certainly not improper in themselves ; but when they keep back the soul from spiritual improvement ; when they prevent its partaking of the bread of life ; when they put aside the performance of the duties of religious worship which we owe to God ; then they become, in a very high degree, sinful and injurious ; by drawing away the

mind from the consideration of its best and most important interests ; and engaging it in those things, which in comparison, are vain, frivolous, and unprofitable.

Thus, in many different ways, and under various pretences, people are kept back from the public worship of the Lord, and the Sabbath day is broken. And most assuredly that person, who in any of these ways makes a practice of breaking the Sabbath, cannot be clothed in that wedding garment of righteousness, in which all must appear, who expect to be received into habitations of glory.

But my brethren, the commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day requires, not only that you should honour the Lord in his holy temple, by attending upon the public means of grace which he mercifully affords you ; but that you should also pass the other parts of the day in such a manner, as may correspond with the lessons of holiness and wisdom which you hear in this place. He who comes to the house of

God one part of the day to join in the public offices of devotion ; and spends the other part in the pursuit of worldly amusement or sensual pleasure, *heareth* the sayings of Christ, but doeth them not. He calleth him Lord, Lord, with his lips ; but he evidently shews that his mind is taken up with other objects, and that his heart is not in earnest in his profession.

In connection with the subject I am now illustrating, there is another practice by which the Lord's day is most awfully profaned : the practice I allude to is that of gambling. It is now some years since I addressed to my congregation a discourse upon this subject ; and although the practice has in a great measure disappeared from the public places in the neighbourhood ; yet it is a question whether it does not prevail to almost as great an extent as it did then. And surely no snare of the devil could be better devised, by which to gain possession of the souls of men.

The person who is addicted to this vice

is generally at the same time guilty of many others : it is a sin which cannot exist alone ; it is rather a complication of sins. For let us consider of what this character consists, and we shall see that it is made up of some of the worst passions that can infest the heart of man. The very first principle on which the gambler acts, is a principle of covetousness, and a desire to gain possession of the money of those who play with him. He is at the same time quite reckless as to the misery or poverty which he brings either upon himself or others. He is reckless also about his home and his family. He is losing or staking that which is probably wanted to keep his children from starving, or himself from running into debt. Attend also to his conversation : listen to the language which proceeds from his mouth during his excitement : what is it but blasphemies and cursings ? Follow him to the end of his game : he has perhaps lost all the hard earnings of his last week's labour, and goes home in sorrow

and bitterness of heart. Or suppose his fortune has been on the other side, and that he has beggared some of his companions. What does he do with the money he has thus obtained? It is probably lavished away as quickly as it was gained, and his employment of the day is concluded in rioting and drunkenness.

And all this wickedness brethren is done on the Lord's own day; on that day which he has consecrated and set apart for his service; on that day on which thousands of his faithful worshippers meet together to praise his blessed name, to meditate upon his glorious majesty, and to hear of his marvellous love!

Surely for these things God will bring them into judgment; and heavy will that judgment be, and deep will they sink under its weight. Yet a little while and their glass will be run, their course of iniquity will be over. And where will their souls stand in that awful day? O that they could be roused from their sad state, and

made to feel the reality of their condition !
O that they could be brought to reflect
that they have imperishable souls which
might yet be saved from perdition ! O that
they might be brought to experience a
Saviour's grace, and a Saviour's love, who,
guilty sinners as they are, looks upon them
with pity and compassion, and earnestly
wishes for their repentance, and stretches
out his arms to receive them to his mercy !
O that they would turn from these de-
grading practices, and suffer them not to
overwhelm their souls in endless misery ;
that they would strive to have their hearts
changed to holier duties ; and their hopes
fixed upon happier prospects : that they
would seek to be reconciled to God through
the merits and the mercies of a crucified
Saviour : that they would seek to have their
souls washed in that blood which was shed
even for the greatest sinners : that they
would humble themselves before him in
contrition and sorrow of heart, and seek
for that pardon and mercy which was never

sought in vain : that they would call upon that holy name which they have hitherto so greatly dishonoured ; and cry unto the Lord to give them a clean heart, and to renew a right spirit within them ! Then would he listen to the voice of their penitent prayer : no one ever sought him without finding him ; no one ever came to him in earnest, and was cast away. He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost ; and the lost soul even of the most guilty may yet return to his favour, and live to rejoice in his glorious salvation.

And are these words spoken in vain brethren ? Are they uttered in the ears of any of those who pursue these evil courses ? Alas ! the house of prayer is not a place congenial to their habits ; and the truths and duties of a holy and self-denying religion would be greatly unwelcome to their ears. Yet it is not in vain that we should be reminded of those things which are highly displeasing to God, and ruinous to the well-being of our souls. If we have been

enabled to avoid the practices I have been considering, so much the happier is it for us. But let us not be vain of our fancied goodness: there are many ways of sin besides these. We are born with the same corrupt hearts and evil natures as the most ungodly of our fellow-men: and how often have our hearts been set upon folly, and our inclinations indulged in opposition to the law of God! If we have turned away from these things, and have entered upon the practice of a better life, it is through the grace of God which has been given to us. Let us not then presume upon our privileges, or suppose that we are so much better than others. We have nothing that we have not received: let us not claim to ourselves a merit which does not belong to humanity. Let us rather endeavour to shew, by our good conversation and conduct, that however numerous may have been the errors, however great the sins of our past years, our conversion from them has been real; and that the path we are now walking in,

is indeed the path that leadeth unto life. Let us give no countenance by word or deed, to the evil practices of our neighbourhood; but rather strive by good advice, and by the better influence of our good example, to draw our deluded fellow-creatures from the evil of their ways, and induce them to become followers and partakers of the same blessings, which God in mercy has granted to ourselves.

Thus shall we shew that we are clothed in the wedding garment of that Master whom we profess to serve. And when he comes to see the guests: when he arrives in the clouds of glory to make up the number of his people, he will fix our portion—not in the place of outer darkness and misery—but in his own blessed presence, in the mansions of everlasting peace and joy.

SERMON XII.

ON THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF A
FRIENDLY SOCIETY,
AGED NINETEEN YEARS.

Matthew ch. 24. v. 44.

Therefore be ye also ready.

You will at once perceive, my Christian friends, how suitable is this text to the occasion of your assembling here this morning. A large portion of the present congregation have met here for the purpose of paying a tribute of respect to the memory of an acquaintance and member of their Society, whose mortal remains have lately been committed to their last resting place.

The minister of religion has no difficulty in finding a portion of Scripture applicable to such a subject. The subject of death is so often mentioned, and we are so often exhorted to prepare for its arrival, that we can scarcely turn over a few pages in the Bible, without being reminded that we are dying creatures; and that it is, or ought to be, our chief and most anxious concern, so to live over the few short and uncertain years of our earthly pilgrimage, that at the end of it, we may die,—not in the fear of the second death,—of that unutterable anguish and misery which will be the never-ending portion of the wicked:—but that we may depart from this world in an humble and believing hope of a joyful resurrection; and of an eternal inheritance among those, who in the days of their flesh were the disciples of Jesus, and who are now his ransomed ones, dwelling in his blissful presence, in the midst of heavenly light and glory.

The words I have chosen for my text

were uttered by our blessed Lord when foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, and the calamities that should befall God's ancient people the Jews, for their inveterate obstinacy and wickedness, in despising, rejecting, and crucifying the promised Messiah; whom God, in the fulness of time, had mercifully sent to be their Saviour and Deliverer.

But the words have reference also to the end of the world; and to the last and great day, when all mankind shall be summoned to judgment:—for we read in a preceding verse, that the Son of man shall be seen “coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” And as the time of our death, to each individual among us, will be, in a great measure, of similar importance to the day of judgment, we may well apply the words to that solemn period.

The uncertainty of life, and the certainty of death, is quite a proverb among us ; almost every one has it on his lips. We see daily cut off around us, the old and infirm ; the middle-aged and strong ; and as in the present case, the young and blooming among our fellow-creatures. We may well lay these things to heart : we may well let them teach us a profitable lesson, and lead us seriously to enquire, which of us shall be the next ; and why it is that we are spared, when many of our friends and acquaintances, both much younger, and it may be, much better than ourselves are snatched away before us. Thus it has always been ; and it is God's will that it should be so, and we are not ignorant of it. We know it from our own constant observation ; and we are assured of it from the infallible prediction of our Saviour ; who a few verses before the text declares, that when the coming of the Son of man shall take place, " Then shall two be in the field ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Two women shall be grinding at the mill ; the one shall be taken, and the other left." Then, two verses following, comes the important exhortation, "Therefore be ye also ready."

My brethren, these words are a sermon of themselves : and if you were to go to your homes with a due sense of their importance upon your minds ; and with an humble, and earnest, and prayerful application of them to your consciences, no other sermon would be needed. But as the heart is prone to be cold and backward, when it should be zealous and earnest in heavenly things ; and is apt to be careless and neglectful, when it should be watching unto prayer ; I shall therefore so enlarge upon these words, as to endeavour to assist you individually to reflect upon the period of your own death, and upon the necessity there is that you should prepare for it. And may our Almighty and gracious Father be so present with us by his blessed Spirit, that the hour you have come to

spend in his house this day may not be spent in vain.

God has made two sorts of habitations, according to the nature of his creatures ; the one for spiritual ; the other for bodily beings. Man, consisting of both natures, is capable of dwelling in both places. The earth is one of these habitations ; heaven is the other ; though heaven, be it remembered, will be only the habitation of the righteous. The earth, whereon man first receives his being, is appointed to be his residence but for a short time. We read in the book of Job, and his words have been appropriately transferred to our Burial Service, that “ Man that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down : he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.” And David saith, in the 90th Psalm, “ The days of our years are threescore years and ten : and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow ; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”

You heard these words at the funeral of your departed friend ;—you hear them whenever you attend the remains of a fellow-creature to the grave : yet how often do they sound in your ears, without impressing you with any profitable feelings. And even now, when I look around upon the present assembly, methinks I perceive some among you whose hearts seem callous and insensible to their application. O, brethren ! are you so confident of long life, that you think it not necessary to reflect upon your dying hour ? Do you vainly imagine that threescore and ten years will be allotted to you ? Are you assuring yourselves that even half that time will be your portion ? Look at the age of your departed friend, and let that teach you a better lesson. How many weeks is it since he was among you, strong and healthy as yourselves : and being younger, was likely to live longer than most of you ! Where is he now ? And do you think that the shaft of death is not approaching to any of

the present congregation? Is there no one amongst us appointed for a speedy summons? Is there no sickness, no disease, no calamity in store for any of us, by which we may be swiftly numbered with the dead? Could all the power, and all the wealth of this world guarantee your life to you even until the setting of to-morrow's sun? No, brethren; the issues of life and death are in the hand of God alone; and the summons may come first to the oldest; or it may come first to the youngest. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong: and though you at present enjoy health and strength, yet that can give you no security for length of years. For with God the days of each individual among you are determined; "the number of your months are with him, he has appointed your bounds that you cannot pass." Are you not persuaded of this truth my brethren, that your life is even as a vapour that vanisheth away;—that it is only like the grass, which in the morning is green and groweth up, but

in the evening is cut down, dried up and withered? And does not the grave of your lately interred acquaintance even now force the conviction upon your minds? O then let me admonish you in the emphatic words of the text! "Therefore be ye also ready."

But for what are you to be ready? Not merely for the laying down your body in the dust: not merely for the time when you shall have no more concern with the things of this world: not merely for the loss of all your earthly joys, or for deliverance from all your earthly troubles and sorrows. But you must be ready for the passing of your souls from this world to another. Man has within him a principle which cannot die; a spiritual essence which will exist through all eternity: and the safety of that spirit is what above all things else you should be anxious for. Be ready and prepared then, when the time of your dissolution shall come, to yield your immortal spirits into the hands of God, cleansed and purified

from earthly corruption, and fit to dwell with him in his heavenly kingdom.

Let us now consider, how we are to be ready: what we are to do, and to be occupied in, in order that we may be best prepared for that solemn event. It must be plain, I think, to the understanding of every one, that whatever happiness may be our portion in the next life, the foundation of it must be laid in this. Here the seed must be sown and cultivated, if we would reap the fruit in eternity. The manner in which we spend our life upon earth, will fix for ever the state of our existence in the world to come. What then have we to do;—how have we to live?

When the Saviour of mankind came into the world his first preaching was this, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” And his forerunner, John the Baptist, began his ministry by preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins: “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” Joined to

repentance is believing in the Saviour : “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” And joined to faith in Christ is obedience to all his commandments : “ Ye are my disciples, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” In the right exercise of these great principles of our religion consists the life and conversation of the true Christian ; of him who will be ready at what hour his Lord shall call him.

What is repentance then ; and who is it that stands in need of it ? Repentance is a mourning for our sins, and a turning away from them : and *sinner*s stand in need of repentance. And brethren, you, and I, and all are sinners : there is none that doeth good and is perfect, no not one : we all have come short of our duty : we all, like sheep, have gone astray, and have turned every one to his own way. I am well assured that I am this morning addressing some, who have not only taken upon them the *profession* of Christ’s religion ; but who have an abiding sense of their Christian

obligations, and are striving to approve themselves faithful disciples of their heavenly Master. And I cannot be otherwise than assured, that I am also addressing others, who have little or no sense of religion upon their minds, and whose paths are not the paths of Christian obedience. But I am not addressing, and I cannot address *one* who does not stand in need of repentance; yea, of deep, and heartfelt, and humbling repentance. To all, though not to all in the same degree, the voice of the Son of man proclaims, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish."

My brethren, I would speak to you in all faithfulness as a servant of Christ, and with affectionate regard as your minister; and I would ask you individually, and singly, Are you conscious that you are a sinner? that in a state of nature you are at enmity with God; and by your daily practice a transgressor of his law? And how deeply are some of you involved in these principles? How careless, how reckless has been your

course? How long continued, how persistingly persevered in! What neglect of all religious duties: what contempt and disregard for all things sacred: what plunging into the follies, the vain deceits, the destructive pleasures of this wicked world! Oh, brethren! these are the things that need repentance: and to repent of them is to mourn for them, and to forsake them. Not merely to shed a few transient tears at the thought of your sins: not merely to be sorry that you have incurred the displeasure of the wise and good among your fellow-creatures: not only to regret that your sins have sometimes brought upon you disgrace, and disappointment, and shame in the sight of men: but to mourn that they have been committed against God: to be deeply afflicted in your souls, that for all the mercies, for all the blessings which he has poured upon you, you should have made him so ungrateful a return. This is that godly sorrow, which alone worketh true repentance. But this sorrow must be

accompanied by the renunciation of every evil practice, of every vicious and unchristian pursuit: there must be no returning to old habits, no indulging in former sinful pleasures, no associating with former evil companions: all these things must be utterly and entirely forsaken: you must touch no more the accursed thing; but henceforth make the word, and the works, and the ways of God your study and delight, and the people of God your companions and friends. This is true repentance; and unless your repentance be of this character, you will not, you cannot be ready for the coming of the Son of man.

Joined to repentance, as I said before, is faith in Jesus Christ: and this indeed is the grand foundation of all religion, the great principle from which springs every thing that is acceptable to God, and beneficial to man. For what then are we to believe in Jesus Christ? For the pardon of our sins. Do we think that our repentance, however genuine it may be, will claim for

us the forgiveness of our offences? If we do so think, we sadly deceive ourselves. That would be to put repentance in the place of the Saviour. He alone is our advocate with the Father. He alone is the propitiation for our sins. After turning away from every evil pursuit, and following every thing that is good, still remember that you cannot atone for yourselves; that you can make no compensation to the justice of the Almighty for your misdeeds, and that your repentance can only be accepted, and your pardon sealed to you through the merits of the Saviour's blood, and by your own humble and stedfast reliance on those merits.

And as you trust in him for the pardon of your sins, so you must look to him for the justification of your persons. "For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Yes, my brethren, after the sincerest repentance; after the most holy and blameless life and conduct, still you must say, We are

unprofitable servants ; we merit nothing at God's hands ; we are justified only by the blood of Jesus ; we are accepted only in the beloved. Beware of resting on any merits, on any good deeds, on any righteousness of your own ; for even the most perfect righteousness of man is only as filthy rags in the sight of Jehovah. This is the great hindrance, the grand stumbling-block in the way of true and vital religion. For the pride of man will not allow him to think so meanly of himself, as that whatever his character may be, however praiseworthy or excellent, he must still throw himself for pardon and justification on the mercy of God in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Still, whatever opposition is made to the doctrine ; however unwelcome to the pride and perverseness of the human heart ; we must preach to you, whether ye will hear, or whether ye will forbear, the humbling though necessary truth, that we are accounted righteous in the sight of God only through the blood of his beloved Son : and

that there is no other name under heaven, no other righteousness in the world by which we can be justified before God, but only that of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We must likewise believe in Jesus Christ for the cleansing of our hearts. "The preparation of the heart is from the Lord." "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Out of the heart; that is, out of the natural heart, unwashed by the blood of Jesus, and uninspired by his blessed Spirit, proceed every thought and imagination that is evil and corrupt; and without his Almighty and constraining influence, it would for ever remain the seat of worldly and vile affections, deceived, and deceiving to the end. But by the believing application of the precious blood of Christ, wrought upon it by the gracious influence of the Spirit, the heart is changed, and man believeth unto righteousness.

Lastly, we must believe in Jesus Christ

for the eternal salvation of our souls. If he has begun a good work in us, we must rely on him to perfect it. He who has brought us to repentance: he who has justified us by the shedding of his own blood: he who has given to us his Holy Spirit to cleanse and purify our hearts, will not omit the last and greatest of his blessings, the ultimate welfare and happiness of our souls. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Such, my brethren, are the objects of your faith in Jesus Christ. But this faith must have its fruits; and you cannot believe rightly, unless you also are obedient to the commandments of the gospel. What then are these commandments? Our Lord has briefly summed them up in these two sentences. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength:" and "Thou shalt love

thy neighbour as thyself." The love of God comprehends the performance of every duty of religion, whether public or private: an awful and reverential respect to his holy name: a devout observance of his Sabbaths: a faithful and constant attendance upon the means of grace which are used in the public worship of the church: a diligent reading and careful meditation upon his blessed word: a constant feeling of thankfulness for all his mercies: a frequent pouring out of the soul to him in private and secret prayer: an abiding sense of his great goodness; of his constant presence and watchfulness; and of his providential care over all his creatures.

The love of our neighbour includes all those duties which we owe to one another, as children of the same Almighty Father; as pilgrims travelling to the same country: that we should be kind and charitable, meek, gentle and forbearing; forgiving those who offend us; restraining the evil;

encouraging the good ; faithful to our trusts in the several stations of life in which God hath placed us ; shewing an example of Christian conduct to our families, to our acquaintance, and to the world around us : living in peace and quietness with our neighbours ; and bearing affection and goodwill to all mankind.

Thus my beloved brethren I have endeavoured to shew you how we ought to live, and what we should be occupied with, in order that when the Son of man shall come, we may be found ready. I trust the Lord will be pleased to bless what has been said to the spiritual improvement of your hearts. Many of you have come here this morning for the purpose of hearing a funeral sermon. Let me entreat you to reflect that your own funeral may be very near at hand. It has not been my object to speak of the dead, except to make his early call a solemn warning to the living. Let not your attendance in this holy place this

morning be considered as a mere formal tribute of respect to your departed brother; but endeavour to make it a matter of serious concern between God and your own souls. In looking round amongst you I see many young persons; and it is always interesting to address the young, because the false wisdom and soul-destroying principles of the world have seldom, in the early period of life, obtained such deadening influence over the feelings of the heart. My young friends, many of you no doubt are looking expectingly forward to a long enjoyment of earthly happiness and pleasure. I sincerely pray God that such may be your portion. But take the kind and affectionate advice of one, who without arrogance may lay claim to greater knowledge, and who has had greater experience, both in the ways of the world, and in the ways of religion than yourselves. If your plans of life, and schemes of happiness are not built upon religion as their only foundation, they will

cause you constant disappointment and vexation, and will pierce you through with many sorrows. The pursuits and practices of the generality of those among whom you live, are not the things wherewith to prepare yourselves to meet your God. They may for a time give a false pleasure to the corrupt propensities of your nature; they may impart a kind of maddening, unreal happiness and enjoyment: but even in this life they will not compensate for the sting and bitterness which they will infallibly leave behind them. No, my beloved friends; the wicked, whatever appearance they may put on in the sight of men, yet in the feelings of their own hearts, “the wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and dirt.” The ways of religion alone “are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” Many have experienced the truth of this; none ever tried and found it vain. O that it may be your wisdom to make so happy a

choice ! O that it may be your resolution, through the help and in the strength of the Lord, to “remember your Creator in the days of your youth !” Believe me that the practices of piety, especially of early piety, will shed such a peace and blessedness around your souls, as no troubles or crosses of life will be able to extinguish or rob you of. They will make you happy in your youth ; they will increase your consolation and your hopes as you advance through the pilgrimage of life ; and they will bring you to your grave in the well-founded assurance of a happy and joyful meeting with those, who have gone before you to the mansions of your Redeemer’s glory.

